The Backside of American History

Presented by Ed Wallace

edited by Angie Richardson

As heard on 570 KLIF AM

Dallas, Texas

****There has been no copyright taken on this material, other than that of the original authors. One is free to use whatever material one would like under the Fair Use of the U. S. Copyright Laws.*

Foreword

This book and my fascination with searching for historical accuracy started on the same hot, dusty and humid day 42 years ago, on the other side of the Pacific. Always an adventurer as a child, while living in the City of Angeles in the Philippines, I had decided to find out why, as my father was always saying, some Filipinos acted so ungrateful toward the United States - particularly when we'd done so much for them. I was just a child on my first overseas posting; but my father, a career Air Force pilot, had been on the islands two decades earlier, when the Second World War had come to an end. So I'd decided to find a few Filipinos who might not have such a high opinion of our joint history and see what they had to say.

Where we lived, in the city of Angeles, our house was within one hundred feet of the end of suburbia - if one could call it that - and, as far as the eye could see beyond what passed as our street, there was nothing but flat plains until, far off in the distance, Mount Arayat, an extinct volcano, rose from the fields. I decided that would be the direction I would go, looking for the truth about history. I didn't get far, maybe three or four miles, before I came across a group of Nipa huts whose owners stood eyeing me with obvious dislike - a sitaution that just didn't happen in Angeles. Many in the city just outside Clark Air Force Base did simply refuse to recognize the fact that you were sharing their space - but I never felt threatened, either in Angeles or on that day. So, deciding they were the folks I was looking for, I asked one of the younger men my question.

"Why do some Filipinos have such a strong distaste for America?" Then, parroting my father's comments, I added, "particularly after all we have done for you and your country."

For the next hour or so I was taught out of school. He told me in no uncertain terms exactly how America had come to be in the Philippines - "not liberating them, but simply supplanting the Spanish rule of the Islands."

Of course, there is nothing more singleminded than a young child emboldened by what he believes to be an unequivocal truth. But I couldn't believe what he was saying: How could it be possible that America, the world's protector of civil rights and the guardian of humanity, had killed hundreds of thousands of Filipinos and forced others out of their homes and into concentration camps, all just to control and pacify the population and subjugate them under American rule? In spite of my shocked unbelief in this young man's interpretation of his country's history, it did form a reasonable explanation for something my own father hadn't been able to figure out - why some Filipinos so obviously didn't love America.

So, that night at the family dinner table I answered my father's oft-asked question with my newfound knowledge. It might have been the way I presented our history with the Filipinos, or maybe he was just in a bad mood that night, but one thing is for sure: Technically, I'm still on restriction. (I know he said something about never being allowed to leave the house for the rest of my life.) However, as it turns out, both had been right in their version of American history, as my father was basing his perceptions on our liberation of the islands from the Japanese in World War Two, while the young Filipino was basing his perceptions on our actions during the Filipino Insurrection from 1898 to 1914. It is in fact combining both of those stories that gives one a more accurate version of our history.

Shortly thereafter, that particular dinner having passed from short-term memory, my father asked me to come down and meet his flight on his return from Vietnam. Like a dutiful son, and possibly because I was bored as usual, I rode the base shuttle bus down to the flightline

at Clark and arrived just as my father's C-54 was being unloaded. His cargo that day was wounded American soldiers being transferred to the base hospital.

I walked toward my father's plane, looking down at the kids - they didn't look that much older than I was - lying on canvas stretchers only inches above the concrete flightline, baking in the midday Filipino sun. Not one said a word, no one was crying or moaning; but for some reason I stopped at one stretcher and looked down at the soldier who occupied it. As I stood there for a moment, neither of us saying a word, I was overcome with the enormity of it all, and to this day I can see that boy soldier's eyes staring at me, as if it happened just yesterday. They still haunt me - the saddest eyes I have ever seen in my life.

The year was 1964. Long before anyone in America had any idea how many of our people were there fighting, I had come face to face with the early tragedy of the Vietnam War.

Five years later, in 1969, I was spending my summer with a plastic surgeon and his family, living on Insurgentes Sur in Mexico City. We were having a light dinner, as was the custom (the heavy meal was lunch in those days, then the siesta and back to work until 7 or 8 at night), when the conversation turned to America and our overseas war. For whatever reason I popped off my lessons from Texas history, and before I knew it I'd said, "Remember the Alamo."

Now, how dumb could anyone be? I was a guest in their home in Mexico, and they could not have been a more lovely family or more gracious hosts - and for whtever reason everyone seemed to lose their appetite after I said that. So I quickly agreed later when, after giving me a lecture similar to the one that ended in my being grounded for life, Dr. Hernandez asked me as a favor to take a few lessons in Mexican History. Of course I agreed; after my inane comment that night, I wanted to show some decent remorse.

During that same stay, on a boring day with nothing to do, I purchased Hunter Davis's Beatles' biography, even though I had read it in 1968 when it had first been published. In Mexico, they purchase their books from England, so I now read the British version; and, in a chapter about the Beatles' appearing at Shea Stadium and a young girl's trip with her friends to the event, I found a glaring discrepancy. In the biography published in America, her mother drove them to the concert in a Cadillac; in the British version, they rode in a Jaguar. Small point, but I realized immediately that one of the two stories was wrong. I also saw right then that nationalism, even if it's just the car in a book, can be changed on an editor's whim.

Four times in my life I've been presented with a different view of history than the one we had been taught in school. Apparently, those who'd lost wars against America had their own side of the story and remembered historical events in a way that wasn't at all flattering to the U.S. I would suspect that somewhere between the two versions, the victor's and that of the vanquished, is where the real truth lies.

The Backside of American History is one result of my contuing quest to find the entire history of the automobile industry, both in America and worldwide - the heroes and villains, the successful and the foolish. Why? Because, ultimately, it was the automobile and its widespread use in this country that came to define the American Century and our economic success.

However, I couldn't properly explain our nation's success as nothing more than Ford's $5-a-day wage's creating a modern middle class - or pinpoint its beginnings as the day the Model T's price fell below $500, and suddenly we were all motorized and mobile. No, more questions demanded answers. For example, how did the 1870s America, a nation of rural farmers, evolve into one of urbanized workers in mere decades?

I came to realize that, for the auto industry to have achieved so much success in our country, other societal factors had to have been in place so that motoring could spread to the masses. Therefore, while the car industry did change everything in this country, at least a reasonable degree of economic improvement had to have taken place first; the final economic chapter from Detroit moved our focus from the industrial production of goods to consuming them - and from there we stepped easily into being the consumer society we are today.

Twice The Backside of American History has concerned events involving my ancestors. For one of my grandfathers, Harold Laird, had been assigned to the British Expeditionary Forces and sent to fight with the White Russian Army during their Civil War. From a grandmother's side came the very first Backside, in which the people of Reedsburg, Wisconsin, stood off the U. S. Army and rescued their friends, the Winnebago Indians of the Wisconsin Dell, from Washington's forcible relocation.

Though there have been many wars in America history, we are usually taught about only the ones in which our military was victorious. Other wars that were just as important - such as the movement for better wages and better working hours' forming unions to guarantee certain basic humanitarian rights - never are taught as such. Yet, though we've learned that those small, forgotten wars, fought on our soil, often involved battles that would leave many dead, their causes were not lost. No, many Americans have given their lives or health for our forty-hour workweek, more representation in government, better wages to move us out of dangerous tenements into a more financially rewarding life and so on. Their sacrifices have been ignored, because 19th Century class warfare in America is somehow deemed unmentionable. But it was there, and it did happen - and every last one of us in the middle class owes as much or more to those who fought for real economic justice than to those who fought in any overseas war.

In 2001, our President asked, "Why do the terrorists hate us?" Although he answered his own question after a fashion, there is forgotten history there. We have a long history with the Middle East that no one has bothered to discuss, even though the facts are easy to find. So, before we invaded Iraq, while others were debating that move, I simply studied our combined history of the last ninety years. In the case of Iraq, studying that nation's history and seeking to know why our relationship with the Iraqis, which had originated and grown from 1958 to 1989, had disintegrated so quickly. After all, Saddam Hussein was once on the CIA's payroll, just as Pancho Villa was once allied with us - and, back when we were all fighting the Russians in Afghanistan, we even had common values with Osama Bin Laden in our joint hatred of the Russian movement on the Afghani people.

History is not always pretty, nor is it always packaged in high moral terms, although that is the most commonly taught version. That's because, for the most part, we tend to learn American history based on Presidents and their positions on world affairs.

That's dangerous: Most presidents say one thing publicly and do another in the background. For example, if I asked you which Senator or Congressman disagreed with Nixon's position to open the door to rapprochement with China, I'd bet money you would have no idea. (Neither do I, but that information can be found.) The point is that we all know it was Richard Nixon who opened China to the world again in the early seventies - but the important voices of opposition and the possibly crucial points they made have long since been forgotten.

We forget that it was Harry Truman who created our National Security State, just as we forget that Dwight Eisenhower did everything he could to diminish the amounts being spent on

it. No, we simplify our past by believing that Democrats are weak on defense, while Republicans are strong - even when, as in Eisenhower's case, sometimes our Presidents are war heroes to boot. Both Eisenhower and Truman were great presidents, yet we get their history wrong more often than not.

If you want to know why America has become the country that it is today, it's not because we are smarter than anyone else. And it's not because things came easy for our ancestors; it's because our struggles were greater than others', and we overcame them collectively. Great struggles, resolved for the benefit of all, create great nations.

When kids write to ask why history is so boring in school, when they love listening to The Backside of American History on our show, I always write the same response: It is because you and I are directly connected to the past. The stories I tell on air are not abstract history, but happened to your parents, grandparents, great-great grandparents and so on. They were real people, and they had to deal with the uncertainties of their times. More important, someone in your family had to survive World War Two, the Great Depression, the Civil War, the religious wars of Europe, the two great plagues, and the failed harvests and starvation during the Little Ice Age, from 1200 - 1850. Obviously, if someone in your direct family line had not survived, then you would not be here today to hear their stories of survival and societial validation. And when you consider that the cycle of birth, life, children and death throughout history could have been as little as 25 years, that means it took as few as 80 generations of your family to take you back to the time when Jesus of Nazareth lived.

Yes, we are all the descendants of survivors of history. Within all those generations, your family members were no doubt frightened by these historical events, but they managed to keep going. That's how we got to America in 2005. (In my case, my great-great grandfather, just four generations of my family, was born in 1845. We had a tendency to have kids late in life.)

I thought The Backside of American History might last a year or two, maybe 100 great stories. It is now four years old and still running strong; we haven't told even a fraction of the unknown but incredible stories that created the society we know today.

Keep asking questions. Keep looking for answers. Settle for the truth - all the truth.

Ed Wallace
October 16, 2005

1. There's Something About Mexico

Imagine, if you will, a time in American history when the only concern in developing our foreign policy and relations was not our highest political ideology but business. Imagine such policy being determined by a new administration in the White House, one with heavy Texas connections and a strong religious undertone. Could such a new president possibly be determined to force democracy on a foreign country where oil was king, and whose dictator he detested? And could that effort mean that prisoners would be held, without trial, in a United States military brig?

Absolutely. And no, these aren't recent events; they're history - events in our relationship with Mexico in the days before the First World War. It's a story of intrigue, double dealing, responding to false threats and missing real ones. And, being history, in the end it gives us clues - both about the events that would ultimately lead to World War II and about how the Middle East came to be in our crosshairs today.

It started in 1911. A German spy, Horst von der Goltz, arrived in Paris to meet with Mexico's Finance Minister, Jose Limantour, the man that most people believed would succeed Porfirio Diaz as the president of his country. Both spy and minister were setting each other up for mischief, but the plan the German was about to unleash would involve the United States in Mexico's internal problems. If it succeeded, his plan would effectively tie up our military, potentially keeping us from joining any conflicts that might arise in Europe. Like most great political deceptions, it depended on secrecy, human gullibility and most of all fear in order to succeed - and it almost did.

According to von der Goltz's autobiography, he had purloined letters from the Mexican Finance Minister "proving" that Mexico was about to form an alliance with Japan, one that could lead both Mexico and Japan into war with the United States. Von der Goltz wrote that he then turned that information over to our Ambassador to Mexico, Henry Lane Wilson. Wilson always denied that, but history records that he left for Washington immediately. Then, just a month later, President William Howard Taft mobilized two-thirds of our standing army, deployed that force along our border with Mexico, and ordered our fleet into position in the Gulf of Mexico.

And so it was in March of 1911; fear and rumors of war were flying. The soldiers at Fort Sam Houston in Texas were saying that the Japanese fleet lay in the waters off Mexico's western coast. The citizens of San Antonio forecast that our army would be in Mexico City by Easter.

President Taft had to deny everything to the media. Of course, our President was telling the truth when he said he had mobilized our army because of internal insurrections in Mexico that had nothing to do with the Japanese. For, at the time, American business was firmly entrenched on Mexican soil; this was the era of dollar diplomacy. Foreign policy was set by the standard of what was good for American business and American business only. We were primarily interested in Mexico's internal politics because they could either protect or destroy our businesses there.

However, things had been changing in Mexico; Diaz had been replaced by General Victoriano Huerta. Then Wilson replaced Taft. Still the rumors of a possible Japanese invasion fleet stayed afloat, worrying enough of the nation that California passed a law: From then on, no Japanese national would be allowed to own property in that state.

Huerta was a vicious piece of work; he ruled by brute power, killing 35 rivals in just his first 17 months in office.

But it should also be noted that, at that time, the world's superpowers were switching their coal-powered navies to oil. And, although exploration for oil had started in the Middle East that same year, the British Navy was then purchasing oil almost exclusively from - you guessed it - Mexico. In fact, at the time, Mexico provided 25% of the world's oil. Much like Saddam Hussein's, Huerta's dictatorship ran on the

fortune created by his country's oil.
That's why German agents were playing all sides against the middle. In case of problems in Europe, Germany planned to make us believe that Japan would invade U.S. soil through Mexico; and, should this deception work, it would also knock our ally, England, and her navy out of Mexican oil.
Well, Woodrow Wilson, who hadn't been in office long, wanted nothing to do with any of these potential problems. Besides, he couldn't stand President Huerta, believing him to be the personification of political sin. Wilson, based on an inner religious certainty, believed that he alone should do something about this brutal Mexican usurper of power.

Wilson said, "The Mexican people must be given democracy, ready or not. My passion is for the submerged 85% who are struggling to be free." Actually, the 85% were just struggling to keep out of the crossfire raging among all the men who wanted to rule Mexico: Huerta, Carranza, Obregon and Pancho Villa. As history often reminds its students, throwing out dictators and forcibly installing democracy is tricky. American businessmen in Mexico pretty much liked Huerta, who was a do-business kind of guy. Worse, European leaders were stunned at Wilson's public demand that democracy be instituted in Mexico; for example, the Kaiser, when he heard of America's position, said, "Morality is all right, but what about the dividends?"
Other nations also did business with Huerta's Mexico, so a multinational standoff was in place. But then two factors came into play unexpectedly. One was our military, still dealing with that rumored Japanese invasion; they took it upon themselves to relocate our fleet from China to the Philippines, having concluded that before fully mobilizing for its Mexican invasion, Japan would first attack both Manila and Pearl Harbor. That's right, our military moved to protect Manila and Pearl Harbor before the Japanese could attack - in 1914, 27 years before Japan forced us into the Second World War.

General Pershing & Pancho Villa in Better Days

The other factor was that our agents were negotiating secretly with Pancho Villa. The administration briefly had come to believe that Villa would be our best bet, should Huerta be overthrown. Of course, then came the Great War in Europe, and yet there was Wilson, still talking about forcing democracy on Mexico. This time he was quoted as saying, "I am going to teach the Latin American republics to elect good men!"
Now fighting a ground war in Europe, Germany made its moves. First it offered to supply Mexico with large amounts of arms and ammunition, but only if Mexico agreed to cut off the British navy's supply of oil.
That move was what led to our naval intervention at Vera Cruz, in which we wouldn't allow the German ships to unload those arms. Nineteen Americans and 127 Mexicans lost their lives on that day in April of 1914.
That resulted in another problem: Germany formally protested to our State Department, claiming that under international law our actions against its ships at Vera Cruz were illegal. Only then did the White House consult legal counsel, and to its dismay discovered that our actions in Vera Cruz had been illegal. Secretary of State William Jennings Bryan had to go to the German Embassy to apologize; he blamed our commanders on the scene for having overstepped their orders - which wasn't true. The German response was to take their ships farther down the coast and unload the military supplies there.

Up to this point, it was apparent that the Germans' divisive plan was starting to work. Suddenly American travelers and businessmen throughout Mexico were returning home, reporting that hostility toward all Americans was becoming a serious problem. "Yanqui Go Home" graffiti started appearing across Latin

America.

But, soon enough, Huerta's reign of terror ended and he was exiled to Spain. Germany immediately plotted his return, knowing just how furious Huerta made Wilson. What with the Great War now in full swing, Germany hoped, Huerta's return might just promote Mexico's war with America and keep us out of Europe.
Also during this period, we decided that Pancho Villa might not have been our best choice for replacing Huerta. Villa, a drunk and a pot-smoker who had once thought he was America's golden boy, turned on us much like Osama Bin Laden; Villa attacked Columbus, New Mexico, shortly after we dropped him.
It just gets better. With the help of the Germans, Huerta did attempt to return to Mexico, by way of the United States. Yes, Huerta and his German handlers met in New York City to plot his return to power, and Huerta was given huge amounts of money to make it so. Flush with cash, Huerta attended a baseball game, told a New York City census taker that he was not retired from his former position as Mexico's despot, bought tickets to the Policemen's Ball - and then quietly hopped a train for the West Coast, on a very southern route.
With our President in New Hampshire, federal agents didn't know what to do. So they took no chances: As Huerta tried to leave the train in Newman, New Mexico, for a short car ride back to his country and power, we arrested him.

At first we placed the former Mexican leader in the El Paso County Jail. But that only scared the hell out of the citizens; El Paso feared that an armed posse, much like the one Villa had recently led in attacking Columbus, would storm out of Juarez to free Huerta. So the would-be dictator was interned in the Fort Bliss brig.

Well, then he got deathly ill. We feared that others would think we'd killed him while in custody, so we released Huerta to his family, which had come to El Paso. Then Huera appeared to recover from his illness - so we rearrested him. Suffering a relapse, General Victoriano Huerta finally died of liver disease on January 13, 1916.

General Black Jack Pershing, ordered to get Pancho Villa, never caught him. Mexico was a mess for decades. And, while in time their people were finally able to vote, the Institutional Revolutionary Party, or PRI, made sure that Mexico was not a functioning democracy. American business left; even today, Mexico's Constitution forbids any American involvement in the country's oil industry.
Japan finally attacked the United States at Pearl Harbor and Manila late in 1941, having learned those two harbors' vulnerabilities during our too-early defense of them 27 years earlier. But, in spite of what the Germans had tried to make us believe, Japan had never had any plans to invade us through Mexico - in 1911 or ever.

We entered the Great War; and, because Mexico backed out of being the world's oil producer, England would develop the Middle East to keep the Empire running. It failed soon afterward anyway.
Today, in a virtual repeat of what happened 91 years ago, we have decided to bring democracy to the Middle East, end the turmoil there and teach those people to, as Woodrow Wilson once said, "elect good men."
History always offers guideposts for those seeking the truth. Remembering them might have warned us that it's almost impossible to force democracy on people, or that it's wise to beware of the potential for blowback. Most assuredly, we might have learned to be careful how we reacted to rumors of invasion. They usually make people - and countries - do silly things.

2. Hell Comes to Bath

Columbine, the Unabomber, the Oklahoma City Federal Building Bombing. There's not one of us who hasn't been affected by the violent events of the past decade. What's worse is that, as a nation, we can't understand it, or rationalize how someone could be so distraught with their enemies, real or imagined, that they could that easily destroy so many lives, yet claim to have a clear conscience.
When Timothy McVeigh, interviewed in a federal lockup in Oklahoma, called the children he killed that day nothing more than collateral damage, most of us were personally and justifiably incensed.

Later, similar anger was our response when two disenfranchised teenagers took aim at their classmates in Colorado. Yet, sadly, the media would report that Columbine was the worst school disaster in our history. That would be incorrect: Searching for a combination of those two situations - a man furious at the government and a school disaster - we discover that the real story of America's worst school massacre happened in 1927, on the day that Hell came to Bath, Michigan.

It was Tuesday, May 17th, of that year when Bath school board member and farmer Andrew Kehoe set about cutting into every tree on his property. Kehoe, known as one of the town's most meticulous people, cut precisely three-quarters of the way through each tree's trunk. He then wired them in place so they wouldn't fall down; he would need those trees for effect, later.
Close at hand was Kehoe's wife Nellie. Incapable of protesting her husband's destruction of their farm, it was because Andrew Kehoe had killed her that morning.
After surgically cutting his trees, Kehoe took baling wire and carefully rounded up and secured his farm animals in place with it, so that they couldn't move. Then he went into his barn and selected a flat piece of lumber; after sanding it carefully, he rubbed linseed oil on it to preserve the wood. Finally Kehoe hand painted on it a short message; he painted it twice, making sure the lettering was perfect, and then he hung it on the fence behind the barn.
Andrew Kehoe was now ready for the next day, the last day of school before summer vacation.

Born 55 years earlier, Kehoe had attended Michigan State College in Lansing, where he'd met Nellie, his future wife. Living for a while in St. Louis, he attended an electrician's school; when he came back home, he married the girl of his dreams. Together they purchased that 185-acre farm just outside of the town of Bath.
The people of Bath didn't always know how to take Andrew Kehoe. Certainly he was quick to help anyone out who had a problem; the natural mechanic and electrician could often be found repairing his neighbors' broken farm equipment. Yet Kehoe's personal grooming was almost obsessively neat: If he got a speck of dirt on his clothes, he was off to shower and put on fresh garments. That struck some as a strange habit for someone to have who was both a farmer and a handyman.
And then again, Kehoe didn't care what others thought. He was known to be intolerant of the views and opinions of others; if you disagreed with Andrew Kehoe, he'd tell you off in no uncertain terms. And he held a grudge for a very long time. It should also be noted that Andrew Kehoe was unbelievably thrifty with his money. And it was this reputation for tightfistedness that had gotten him elected to the Bath School Board in 1926.

America's small towns in the 1920s were finally moving past the day of the one-room schoolhouse, with all the children and grades in the same classroom. It was the dawn of our modern system of dividing the children into different grades, and Bath was wholeheartedly welcoming the new era. The city had just built a brand-new school to accommodate modern educational methods. Of course, like most growing cities, Bath had been forced to raise property taxes to pay for its new school. And that tax increase had enraged Andrew Kehoe; he felt that those higher taxes were financially ruining him.
Though polite at the school board meetings, Kehoe frequently voiced his opposition to those increased school taxes, calling them unlawful and unnecessary. It was becoming a fixation; Kehoe was increasingly obsessed with school board politics, all the while secretly nourishing a comprehensive hatred for the board's president, Emory Huyek.

The school board, in an effort to quiet his outbursts and sympathetic to his plight, offered him the job of doing the maintenance at the new school to help him pay his bills. Yet, while he accepted their generosity, Andrew Kehoe also took advantage of his new position, devising a plan to prove to everyone that the new school and its inherent tax increase weren't necessary. Believing that it was a way to get back at all those people in Bath who had ever slighted him, Kehoe started laying out his plan in the winter of 1926.

On regular trips to nearby Lansing, Keyhoe made purchases of the explosive Pyrotol and boxes of dynamite.

Now Kehoe never bought much at one time; and when hardware storeowners asked him what he was doing with the high explosives, he calmly replied that he was just clearing his farm of old tree stumps. When neighbors asked about the frequent explosions they heard on his place, Kehoe gave them the same story, just clearing the stumps. In fact, he was testing detonation devices.

In the spring Kehoe started transferring the Pyrotol and the dynamite to the Bath School under cover of darkness, carefully placing the explosives in every crevice of the school. In the walls, under the flooring, in the ceiling — all in all, Andrew Kehoe planted more than a thousand pounds of dynamite in the Bath School, and possibly twice that much Pyrotol. Then again, knowing what the outcome of his plan would be, he was also rigging up his whole farm exactly the same way. It took him months to set all the explosives.

Bath Michigan Schoolhouse 1927

In fact, he finished all his preparations just in time. On the afternoon of May 17th, finished with the school, Kehoe put every piece of scrap metal he could find on his farm into the bed of his pickup truck - on top of another pile of dynamite. He then calmly went to sleep.

Everyone says that May 18th, 1927, began as a beautiful spring day in Michigan. Talk on the street was about Charles Lindbergh's attempt to fly across the Atlantic Ocean. As the schoolchildren filed into their classes at about eight o'clock that morning, the air most likely rang with their cheerful plans for the summer vacation that would start the next day. Little did they know that, inches below their feet, Hell waited to devour them and their new classrooms in flames.

Getting up early that day, Andrew Kehoe walked around his farm one last time, and at exactly 8:45 that morning he set off the explosion that started destroying his farm. The house was gone, the barn, the animals he had wired in place. His neighbors, hearing the massive blast, came running to see if they could help.

Kehoe met them at the front of his property and told them, "Boys, you are my friends. You'd better get out of here." He then made the ominous suggestion, "You better go down to the school."

And at the exact moment that Kehoe drove away, another blast occurred. This time, in town, Andrew Kehoe's work had destroyed the new Bath School and its students.

Moments later, Kehoe, arrived on the scene in his pickup, witnessing the results of his handiwork firsthand. Already the stunned townspeople were frantically digging through the half of the school that had been leveled to the ground. Kehoe was also stunned — not at the damage and pain he'd inflicted on his neighbors and the town's children, but because half of the school was still standing. Apparently, the first explosion had caused his other detonation devices to malfunction.

Turning, Kehoe saw Emory Huyek, the school board president, and beckoned him over. Not realizing that Kehoe was behind the devastation, Huyek walked toward him and his truck. And when Huyek reached him, Kehoe took out his rifle and fired into a detonator inside the vehicle. Shrapnel from that explosion killed everyone within 100 feet, including Huyek and Andrew Kehoe.

The people of Bath thought they were under military attack. First they'd heard a tremendous explosion from out at Kehoe's farm. Then the school blew up, and then more distant explosions emanated from his farm

during the rescue efforts.

For hours, rescue workers could still hear the screams of their children, still trapped beneath the rubble that had once been their school.

Lansing sent its police and fire departments, and State Troopers showed up and removed another 504 pounds of unexploded dynamite. Rescue efforts had to halt while the dynamite was being removed; prolonging the agony of the parents whose children were still unaccounted for; as they waited impatiently for the troopers to finish, so the rescue operations could resume, they couldn't help hearing the trapped survivors' pitiful cries for help.

In all, 46 people besides Kehoe died in Bath that day: 38 children, six teachers, the school board president and Kehoe's wife. Hundreds more were severely injured or crippled for life.

When the police made it out to Kehoe's farm, they finally found the sign he had so carefully made by hand the day before. It read, "Criminals Are Made, Not Born."

They buried the last child that Sunday, the same day Lindbergh landed in Paris. While the rest of the nation cheered his accomplishment, the people of Bath mourned. More than 100,000 cars drove slowly through the town that day, as neighbors from nearby cities showed their respect for the suffering survivors of Bath.

The school was torn down and another built, adding to Bath citizens' financial hardships. Today a memorial stands at the site of the original school and that tragedy of May 18th, 1927, a silent and forgotten testament to one man who strongly believed that school taxes were wrong.

Posted on the Internet for all to see, however, is a more bizarre memorial. The people who now live in homes near where the original Bath School stood claim that the spirits of those dead children wander their hallways at night.

Today the media reports that Colorado's Columbine was the nation's worst school disaster. While it certainly was a modern-day tragedy, it can't hold a candle to the day that Andrew Kehoe brought Hell to Bath, Michigan.

3. Creating America's Master Race

The year was 1933 when Nazi Germany passed its first law decreeing the mandatory sterilization of all citizens deemed unfit to have children. This beginning stage of Hitler's plan to create a master race - the perfect Aryan, as it were - allowed infanticide for children born with serious birth defects. And doctors had to report any genetic disorder to the courts.

Of course, it was only the start of a period of horror in Germany. Next came the expulsion of the Jews and Gypsies; before it ended, 6 million "undesirables" had been exterminated. Many others became human guinea pigs, Josef Mengele's subjects for inhuman medical experiments.

Today Americans view Hitler's attempt to create his German Master Race with revulsion. Perhaps this is because we don't know one crucial fact: America tried to do it first.

Six years before Germany's ethnic cleansing laws, our own Supreme Court upheld a state's right to sterilize anyone it deemed undesirable. President Calvin Coolidge said, "It is imperative to keep inferior races out of America, for America must be kept American."

It had all started with Charles Darwin's book, On the Origin of Species by Means of Natural Selection, or The Preservation of Favoured Races in the Struggle for Life, published in 1859, which detailed his theory of evolution. Once Darwin's theory became accepted science, it wasn't long

before politicians and scientists were discussing how to breed a perfect race by getting rid of their countries' undesirables. The science of doing that is called eugenics, a term that Darwin's own cousin, Sir Francis Galton, gave us in 1883.

Within a couple of years, the idea of creating a pure race came to America, and the action we took was to start denying certain people the right to have children. By 1890, the push was on to improve the Anglo race.

The first victory for eugenics groups in America was the creation of the very first IQ tests. That's right, the IQ tests that our kids take today were first created and instituted in an effort to find those whose mental abilities didn't stand up to the rest of society's. One term that nearly everyone knows is "moron." We got it from a eugenics scientist working on IQ tests; he created the label to categorize persons with an IQ of between 50 and 75 - where "normal" is 100.

In 1907 Indiana became the first state to pass laws favoring the sterilization of certain people, based on the science of eugenics. Twenty-seven other states would shortly follow. At first the laws were specific. You had to be judged insane, idiotic or an imbecile before the state could order you sterilized. However, like many a government mandate passed with the best of intentions, the list kept expanding; eventually, legal grounds for sterilization would include deafness, blindness, alcoholism or drug use.

Of course, long before Indiana passed that first law, certain doctors had already been performing sterilization procedures. One was Dr. H.C. Sharp. Sharp, the head physician at the Indiana State Reformatory, a home for delinquent boys - none of whom fit any of the state's qualifications for sterilization. They were just troubled or abandoned kids; some had run away from home simply to get away from abusive parents. Dr. Sharp experimented on no fewer than 465 of these defenseless children between 1899 and 1907. And that's by his own admission, when he defended his actions. It should be pointed out that it was Sharp's experiments on those helpless children that gave us the medical procedure known today as the vasectomy.

By 1906, J. H. Kellogg of cereal fame was holding lectures on Race Betterment at his sanitarium in Battle Creek, Michigan. In 1914 courses on eugenics, or racial superiority, were being taught at Harvard, Columbia, Cornell and Brown universities. The American Eugenics Society put on exhibits at state fairs across the country, comparing mating perfect humans to creating a prize bull. At their 1926 display in Philadelphia, the Society's sign read, "Some people are born to be a burden on the rest." The Nazis would later use that exact statement as justification for their actions.

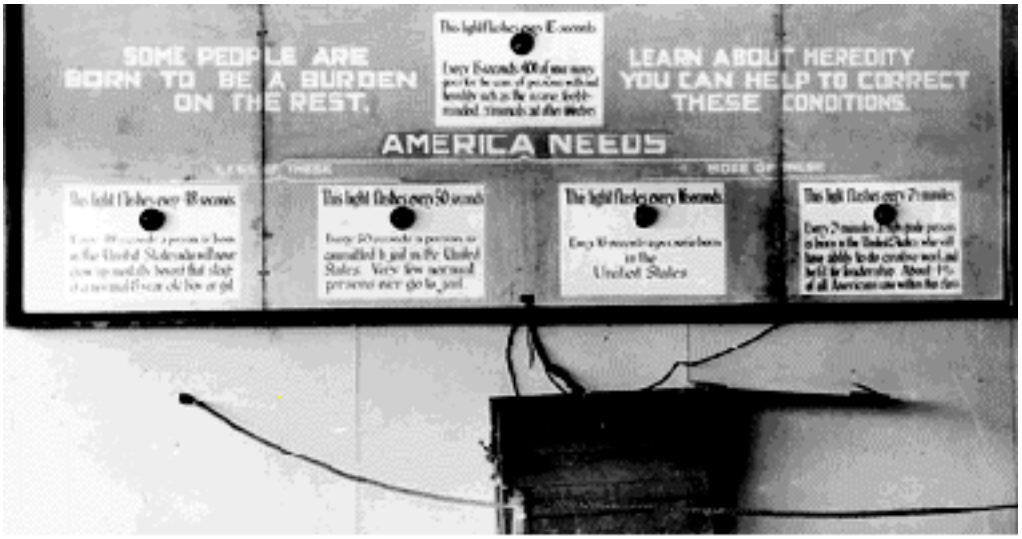
In 1917, the movie The Black Stork depicted how wonderful America could be if we just stopped the breeding of undesirables and let certain babies die at birth. It starred Dr. Harry Haiselden as himself; appropriately so, as it had been Dr. Haiselden who, in 1915, had taken eugenics to a new level by refusing to treat children born with birth defects and allowing them to die. Suddenly, doctors across America came forward; backing Dr. Haiselden's stand, they vowed that they too would refuse to help any child live who had been born less than perfect.

Then came a landmark case, that of 18-year-old Carrie Buck. Considered feebleminded, just like her mother, the girl lived in the Virginia State Colony. Albert Priddy, superintendent of the institution, picked Carrie out for sterilization knowing that a lawsuit would follow.

It did, and the suit was appealed all the way to the Supreme Court. Of course, the deck was stacked against Carrie Buck: The physician who sterilized her was also an attorney handling her case. And on May 2nd, 1927 - six years before the Nazis adopted the idea - the Supreme Court ruled 8 to 1 that the

states had the right to sterilize those they deemed unfit.
Justice Oliver Wendell Holmes would deliver the majority opinion. He wrote in part, “It is better for all the world, if instead of waiting to execute degenerate offspring for crime, or to let them starve for their imbecility, society can prevent those who are manifestly unfit from continuing their kind. Three generations of imbeciles are enough.”
That’s right, our government made creating a Master Race America’s official policy. Our highest court in the nation had kicked the doors open.

More than 60,000 Americans - maybe far more - would eventually be sterilized, on increasingly flimsy pretexts. Many children sterilized had been considered feebleminded because they were slow in school; actually, they only needed glasses. They weren’t morons; they simply couldn’t see to keep up. There is the possibility that others that today would be diagnosed with attention deficit disorder also fell into the “feebleminded” category.


SOME PEOPLE ARE BORN TO BE A BURDEN ON THE REST.
LEARN ABOUT HEREDITY YOU CAN HELP TO CORRECT THESE CONDITIONS.
AMERICA NEEDS
This light flashes every 10 seconds
Every 8 seconds a feebleminded person is born in the United States
This light flashes every 50 seconds
This light flashes every 8 seconds
This light flashes every 7 minutes
Poster Promoting Eugenics for America's Youth 1927

Ray Hudlow was only a boy when he ran away from his alcoholic and abusive father, which made him a delinquent. For that he was sterilized in 1942. He joined the Army the next year and served with honor in the Second World War. In 1999, at age 75, he asked the Virginia legislature for an apology for what the Commonwealth had done to him. They refused. As Senator Warren Barry told him, the legislature saw “little sense in going back to stir up the pot of history” or in reliving one of the most unfortunate chapters in America’s history. Perhaps that’s why those chapters don’t appear in the history our schools teach.

After World War II, when we discovered the Nazis’ atrocities, Americans suddenly realized that we had done some of the exact same things. Well, no one wanted to be thought a Nazi; the Eugenics Societies all disappeared quickly. However, the sterilizations continued, quietly. The last was believed performed in California in 1972.
This part of our history is still soft-pedaled. You’ve more than likely never heard that Americans once tried to breed our undesirables out of the race. You certainly didn’t know that Hitler got the idea from us.
One last story - the final chapter in the life of Carrie Buck, the sterilized 18-year-old girl who lost the rigged Supreme Court case in 1927. She was found alive and well in 1980, living in Charlottesville, Virginia, with her sister Doris. And it turns out that Carrie wasn’t feebleminded at all. Neither was

her sister Doris, who had also been sterilized - though no one had ever told her that. At the time, doctors maintained that they had performed an appendectomy. Carrie had always known her fate, but it was 1980 before Doris finally learned why she had never been able to have children.

A sad chapter of American life closed. And hidden. Today all that remains of that time in America, when sterilization was going to give us a more perfect race, are three things: IQ tests, the original scoring system to find those in need of sterilization. The vasectomy, courtesy of the 465 truant Indiana schoolboys, unsuspecting guinea pigs whose lives Dr. Sharp irreversibly changed. And the word "moron."

Remember all the "little moron" jokes kids used to pass around? Today, when one thinks of all of the Americans who suffered to bring it to us, the word "moron" doesn't seem humorous at all.

4. America's Forgotten Insurgents

The past few years have changed all of our lives. For what we now believe is the first time, Americans know that we are no longer isolated from terror in the world.

Could it be possible that we're helpless to defend ourselves, should those who hate the United States decide to strike again on American soil? After all, if New York and Washington can be struck with seeming ease, why not Detroit, Chicago, or even Dallas Fort Worth?

However, in our shock over the events of the last three years, we have forgotten that at times our ancestors also feared for our society. Enemies operating within our country have sought before now to destroy the American way of life, for no other reason than that they simply disagreed with the policies of our government.

We all perceived the media's portrayal of the destruction of the twin towers and the Pentagon as the first time America had come under attack since the war of 1812. That's curious, because those statements are not entirely accurate; and it's discouraging, because it reveals a great ignorance of our history - certainly of our recent history. The last attack from within started right at 100 years ago. The scope and reach of our government's reprisals lasted for half a century, before the public finally realized we were only chasing shadows.

Leon Czolgosz was a 28-year-old blacksmith, an immigrant German Pole living in Cleveland who fervently believed in the writings of Emma Goldman, a well-known anarchist writer of the time. A registered Republican who just weeks earlier had voted in the primaries, he believed that our government was corrupt, at least in saying that it stood for the people of the United States. After all, Leon had only to look around him to see the poverty and despair of the masses, the use of our children in factories and mines, the 60- to 70-hour work weeks that paid too little to cover both rent and food. To this anarchist's mind, the government represented only the wealthy. It offered no protection to the masses that elected it.

With that in mind, Leon went from Cleveland to Buffalo, New York, where he assassinated President William McKinley at the Pan American Exposition. America was stunned to discover that we had enemies within our borders. Distrust of recent immigrants had been a way for life for the previous 20 years; now we knew that that distrust had been valid.

For the next couple of decades robberies, occasional murders and bombings took place across America, as these heinous anarchists went about their business of trying to disrupt our economy and topple our government. One bomb, at a San Francisco parade in 1914, killed 10 people and injured a hundred others. The turning point came on June 2nd, 1919, when anarchist bombs went off in eight American cities, including Washington DC. That particular explosion partially destroyed the house of our Attorney General, A. Mitchell Palmer.

When Lenin and Trotsky and the Red Army overthrew the Czar of Russia, at first it was considered an anarchist revolution. But anarchists in Russia had the same stated goal as our homegrown terrorists had in this country: creating a fair distribution of wealth. The Russians would label their country a worker's paradise,

though nothing could have been farther from the truth. By that time in America, anarchy was being given a new name: Bolshevism.

Mitchell Palmer went into action after June 2nd, 1919; he sent out federal agents to round up and deport any immigrant that they even suspected of being against our form of government. The feds rounded up 249 suspects in just the month of December that year, 1,200 in total.

And most of America was glad to see Washington being so forceful. No one cared about the rights of those accused; they weren't even Americans, they were bad people who took advantage of our kindness and liberal immigration laws - and then turned against us. Many of those arrested were sent to jail, some even executed, for crimes that, as likely as not, they didn't commit. That may have well been Sacco and Vanzetti's problem.

Patriotic fervor became hideously apparent on May 6th, 1920, at a Chicago baseball game: George Goddard didn't rise to his feet for the playing of our national anthem. Such disrespect infuriated Samuel Haggerman, a member of a naval honor guard there for the game, and he shot Goddard dead on the spot. The audience attending the ball game stood and cheered the sailor for doing so.

And then in the twenties, just as suddenly as our fear of anarchists had begun, it disappeared. Washington, still just as fearful that someone might overthrow the government, followed up the Palmer Raids of 1919 to 1921 by forming the Federal Bureau of Investigation under J. Edgar Hoover and severely limiting foreign immigration.

The Ku Klux Klan and the Black Legion also rebuilt themselves in the twenties. This was a direct response partly to America's falling morals, partly to the nation's fear of immigrants and anarchists. In the end, the Klan and the Black Legion, claiming to be 100% American, waged violent guerilla war on anyone who disagreed with their narrow-minded beliefs.

ANARCHISTS AWED BY POLICE CLUBS

Speakers at a Mass Meeting Carefully Avoid All References to Registration.

RIOT BREAKS OUT LATER

Ten Men and One Woman Arrested in a Fight Following the Abuse of Guardsmen.

America's fears didn't go away, however, even though no one opposed our government any longer. No, we still had enemies, but their nationality was no longer front-page news. Foreign-born criminals had been replaced by American criminals - Al Capone and his ilk. Page-one headlines now focused America's attention on organized crime.

It's amazing that, when anarchists robbed our banks and payroll guards in the first two decades of the 20th century, they were rightly seen as enemies of the people. But when John Dillinger and Bonnie and Clyde did the exact same thing ten years later, they were regarded as modern-day Robin Hoods; some people still believe that today. We excuse that double standard in various ways: First, they were natural-born Americans, not foreigners. And it was the Depression; times were tough.

But that could also have also been said in 1905. For the average laborer, trying to provide for a family, times were much tougher then. Their response of some Anarchists in America was to set off bombs regularly, killing many, and going so far as to murder one president they disagreed with. Anarchists evolved into Reds, then became known as Communists during the Palmer Raids.

The Communist Anarchist scare again became front-page news in the late thirties. Prohibition was a thing of the past, and American bank robbers had all been killed or jailed; this time, we feared that Communist-Anarchists had taken over our labor unions.

So, in 1937, the House formed the Dies Committee, the forerunner of the Committee on UnAmerican Activities. Martin Dies, a Klan sympathizer, was named its chairman. In fact, the Ku Klux Klan sent Dies this telegram: "Every true American, and that includes every Klansman, is behind you and your committee in its effort to turn the country back to the honest, freedom-loving, God-fearing Americans to whom it belongs."

As you might know, the Dies Committee never once investigated the KKK's un-American activities. John Wood, another member of that Congressional group, explained that the Klan had never been targeted because,

“After all, the KKK is an old American institution, much like the moonshiners.”
For the next 15 years we were hunting and seeing Communists everywhere. That fear reached its peak in Joseph McCarthy.

In February of 1950, during a speech to a women’s group in West Virginia, McCarthy said that he had in his coat pocket a list of 55 Communists working in our State Department. Later than same day at another talk, his “list” contained more than 200 names. Reporters who had covered both events knew McCarthy was lying, but they printed the story as truth anyway.

Then came the Korean War, and McCarthy’s witch-hunt gained momentum. Hearings were held, and many were accused; though no one was ever convicted during that period, hundreds of lives were certainly destroyed. And, though he knew the truth about the man, the only public statement Eisenhower ever made about him was that he wouldn’t get into the gutter with McCarthy. Privately, those who knew the President said that he detested Tailgunner Joe.

At the end of the Korean conflict, McCarthy turned his Communist-finding radar on the U. S. Army; it would be his undoing. Edward R. Murrow made him the focus of his See It Now program, for the first time showing Americans everywhere the damage that had been done in the name of protecting the nation. Within 15 years, the Ku Klux Klan and other right-wing groups would drift into decline, as the public would no longer accept their terrorizing of innocent people.

A decade after McCarthy’s disgrace, we passed the Civil Rights Act of 1964 to ensure that our government would never again deny individuals their rights under the Constitution. But don’t be misled: There were two lines of history in 20th-century America. The growth of America as a great nation was one; the other was the shadow of hate chasing those who they believed might harm us.
When the Berlin Wall fell in the late eighties, the Cold War and the Communist-hunts ended for good. They were replaced recently by the next threat, international terrorism. But, if you want to find the date that most of our fears of the 20th century started, it was the day William McKinley was assassinated by an anarchist. And all Americans came to fear strangers we didn’t understand.

By the way, it was prosperity for all that killed the Anarchist movement - not government action. It’s just possible that prosperity for all would kill terrorism, too.

5. The Power of the County

In July of 2002 we were treated to the Bush Administration’s latest concept for its War on Terrorism: Rewriting the Posse Comitatus Act, to allow our military to help out with law enforcement duties here at home.

To fully understand the rule of law concerning threats to our citizens, you have to go back to England in 871, the time of King Alfred the Great, who first appointed constables for the counties, called shires. Their title would be “shire-reeve,” from which we draw the modern term sheriff.
Now, in those primitive days, should the British shire-reeve need help in apprehending a criminal or maintaining order, he would give the hue and cry - yell loudly for the criminal to stop in the name of the king. Any male over 15 years of age in the county who heard it and did not help restore order risked being adjudged guilty of a misdemeanor. And from that custom we get the term, posse comitatus, Latin for the power or force of the county.

Our current law banning the use of our military for civil law enforcement came about in 1878, as the result of the end of the Reconstruction period in the South. Northern Troops had been used, and had often abused their powers, in maintaining law in the defeated states. Additionally, out in the Wild West, Army Fort Commanders, often the only law around on our frontier, were accused of abusing their legal status in determining and enforcing the law. Private vendettas undertaken by public servants were not uncommon.

The arguments against such activity go all the way back to the debate over our Constitution in 1787.

The delegates debated many times the question of whether we should even have a standing army - and, if we did, how we would keep it under civilian control.

Maryland Delegate Luther Martin told the assembly, “When a government wishes to deprive its citizens of freedom, and reduce them to slavery, it generally makes use of a standing army.” One would assume that Martin’s position on a standing army can be considered a no vote.

Even the Federalist Papers, the birthplace of our large centralized government, made it quite clear that the federal government should never be involved in law enforcement. James Madison too saw Washington’s overall role in crime prevention, arrest and punishment as remaining limited.

Of course, that was also our Constitution talking. The reality is that we have often used our military to quell disturbances. Among the problems handled by our military over the early decades were Shay’s Rebellion in 1787, the Whiskey Rebellion in 1794, and the Anti-Catholic Riots in Philadelphia in 1846. The military was used to enforce the Fugitive Slave Laws in 1854, to quell the Draft Riots in New York in 1863, and in the previously mentioned Occupation of the South from 1865 to 1877. And the one thing that every last one of those situations had in common was the fact that our government was more often than not, wrong to do it.

That’s right; politicians used military force when the question of right and wrong seemingly escaped their logic. Even Congress realized that, and so came the Posse Comitatus Act of 1878. No longer was our military allowed to join, to perform or to take over local law enforcement. And guess what? That law has still been ignored, many times, over the last century.

We’ll start at the Johnson County War in Wyoming, April 5th, 1892, a battle between the immigrant settlers and the Wyoming Cattlemen’s Association. Now, the wealthy cattlemen didn’t want the immigrant newcomers in the area, mostly because their claims broke up the state’s open grazing. In turn, that led to over-grazing, which led to the loss of half the state’s cattle.

So, using the excuse that the immigrants were rustling their stock (and a very few actually were), the cattlemen hired 50 gunslingers to go to Buffalo, Wyoming, assassinate the sheriff, and kill as many of the immigrant rustlers as they could find.

They managed to hang two people and kill one Nate Champion before 300 people in Johnson County got together and took on the vigilantes, holing them up at the TA Ranch. Someone there, however, managed to get a telegraph to Wyoming Senators Carey and Warren, who ran it to the White House; sure enough, President Harrison commanded the 6th Cavalry at Fort McKinley to ride to the rescue. No, not to the rescue of the people of Johnson County, who’d been bushwhacked by these gun-toting mercenaries; the 6th Cavalry rode under orders to save the gunmen and the Cattlemen’s Association members who had gone along for the ride. Which they did.

Next up, the mining town of Coeur d’ Alene in Idaho. A strike was under way by the unionized mine workers after the financial panic of 1893. During the strike, many men were killed, and the governor called for federal troops to quell the uprising. Along came our Buffalo Soldiers, who rounded up every miner in town and imprisoned them without trial, some for months on end.

When finally the striking miners’ ringleaders were tried, convicted and sentenced to federal prison, their sentences were overturned on the very first appeal. Yet the city of Coeur d’ Alene stayed under martial law for years.

We used our military to break up strikes during the First World War, and to hunt for Bolsheviks in our midst. Unsuccessfully, I might add.

And yes, in 1932, Douglas McArthur led the armed force that ran the Bonus Marchers out of Washington, DC. The marchers, veterans of the First World War, were only asking for money that the government had promised them. The veterans’ mistake? They asked for early compensation because of the hardships of the Great Depression. Both George Patton and Dwight Eisenhower were with the troops attacking their brethren in the Bonus Army, and both wrote that it was the lowest moment of their careers.

Military advisors were on hand for the Branch Davidian Siege. However, that was legal, because we had rewritten the Posse Comitatus Act in 1981 and 1986, to allow our military to get involved with the War on Drugs. When the Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco and Firearms stated that David Koresh was operating a meth-amphetamine lab, that made it legal to use military force there. Of course, Koresh didn’t have any drug lab,

and government documents released later showed that the ATF knew it. The lie simply freed the military to loan the strike force equipment and advisors.

Ronald Reagan had been the man who managed to get the Act changed, although the decision was not unanimous in his own Cabinet. One person objecting was Defense Secretary Casper Weinberger, who said, "Responding to those calls would make for terrible national security policy, poor politics and guaranteed failure in the campaign against drugs." Looking back on the last 16 years, Cap the Knife was right.

Credit for the modern idea of deputizing our military for all crime-fighting activity actually goes to ... Bill Clinton. In September of 1998, Representative Bob Barr, from Georgia, told the media that our Justice Department was shopping around to get expanded powers to fight crime. Among the things for which they were quietly lobbying:

* Expand the definition of terrorism,
* Seize commercial vehicles for federal use,

Bonus Marchers Under Attack

* Expand wiretap authority without a court's approval,
* Allow the FBI to seize personal property in criminal and civil cases, and
* Yes - rewrite the Posse Comitatus Act, to allow government to involve our military more in local law enforcement.

Now, this is not a statement against our military. The men and women who serve do their jobs wonderfully, standing on their honor and integrity. But their mission is different from that of civilian law enforcement. Our military is trained, rightly, to win battles and conflicts using unceasing and overwhelming force. That's what they do, and they do it better than any other organization known.

Law enforcement, on the other hand, requires patient investigation and peaceable arrest if possible, all done with respect for the individual's civil rights.

Keep in mind that the role of the military in law enforcement was debated again in October of 1998. Leading the fight to keep the military on its primary mission, protecting us from forces outside the country, was Texas Representative Hector Reyes. He reminded Congress that when a young man was shot and killed by a Marine Corps patrol on our Texas border, the government was forced to settle that case with his family for $2 million.

Wanting to militarize everything was Ohio Congressman James Trafficant - the same Congressman who was recently expelled from Congress for being convicted of a felony. This circumstance brings up a question: Why is it that the people who have the biggest problems with their personal integrity, are inevitably those who act as if everyone else is a crook?

Our military has made our country safe by defending us against foreign enemies. However, if one goes looking for an incident in which they were rightly used to help restore order within our country's borders, it might be hard find one case of the military's civilian use in which the law was on the politicians' side. No, the military was used when the law wouldn't get the job done, because brute force was needed to suit a politician's whims or destroy his political enemies.

I t might be best to remind those that while George Washington was president, and under fire from critics, a few of his close advisors went to him and suggested that he use our military to install himself as King of the United States. Washington replied, "Gentlemen, that is not what I fought for."

Washington also gave us this warning to consider as he left the presidency: "Government is not reason, it is not eloquence. It is force. Like fire, it is a dangerous servant and a fearsome master."

Maybe our current politicians would do well to study more of our history and less time studying the public opinion polls.

6. The Voice of the People's Freedom

His name was Benny Bache, and he died so you and I could enjoy a free press. What's more important, Benny's story shows that in the past two hundred years nothing has really changed in this country, other than our guaranteed freedoms.

Benny Bache was born in the Colonies. As a young man, he lived in Europe for nine years and was educated in the finest French and Swiss schools.

In 1790 his beloved grandfather died, leaving Benny a printing press as part of his inheritance. Benny, against the advice of friends who suggested he become a book publisher, decided instead to edit his own Philadelphia newspaper. First he called it the General Advertiser, then the Aurora General Advertiser and then simply the Aurora.

It was a good decision, for within the year the Bill of Rights was officially adopted. And its first provision was that Congress should make no law abridging the freedom of speech or of the press.

There was a small problem. Although Bache was the darling of Philadelphia's upper-crust society and had an impeccable Revolutionary heritage, he didn't care much for the presidency of George Washington. Bache accused him of wasting public funds, nepotism, treating the office of the Presidency more like a monarchy and needlessly seeking war against France. More and more, Benny found himself believing in Thomas Jefferson's view of how this nation should be built. Benny would write of Washington's administration, "All governments are more or less combinations against the people, and as rulers have no more virtue than the ruled."

Things became more heated for Benny when Washington showed neutrality in the war between England and France in 1793. After all, Benny reasoned in print, wasn't it not too long ago that France came to our rescue in our own Revolution against England, and without them wouldn't we still be a colony? Benny also defended the rights of the average Frenchman during their revolution, claiming that tyrants should be overthrown.

It might have had some effect; Washington refused to run for a third term. And, in his final speech to the nation, Washington said, "We should not have excessive partiality for one foreign nation and excessive dislike of another."

And with that, Washington was gone and John Adams was in. That only made things worse for Benny, who immediately launched what he felt were justifiable attacks on Adams's love of the pomp and circumstance and the grandeur of the office. Of course, in his anger at Adams, Benny was setting up Adam's defenders, the Federalist newspapers, to take on Jefferson, calling him a coward in the Revolution, an enemy of the Constitution and an atheist. Noah Webster, sounding a lot like the Rush Limbaugh of his day, wrote about all Democratic Republicans this way: "They are the refuse, the sweepings of the most depraved part of mankind from the most corrupt nations on earth." We later bought Mr. Webster's dictionaries by the thousands, but that isn't the way Webster's dictionary defines a "democrat" today.

Adams won the presidency; Jefferson became his vice president. Bache was just getting started; once elected, Adams would be called old, querulous, bald, blind, crippled and toothless in the Aurora's pages. Now in spite of its political sensationism, Benny's paper was losing money, lots of it: In fact, from 1790 to 1798, he would lose $20,000. That was a lot more money in those days than it is now, but he kept at it. He believed strongly that the press had a duty to inform the citizenry if the government was not operating in the manner and fashion laid out by our founding fathers and which our own revolution had been devoted to creating. His wealthy friends in Philadelphia started to view him as a pariah.

Now, to be fair, not all of what Bache's wrote about Adams was true. But much of what he had written had been completely accurate, including Adams's secret plan to have close presidential races decided in private, without voters' knowledge or consent - and his passion for being treated in a manner befitting the king of America.

The Federalists put their most rabid smear artist on Benny, William Cobbett, who published the Por-

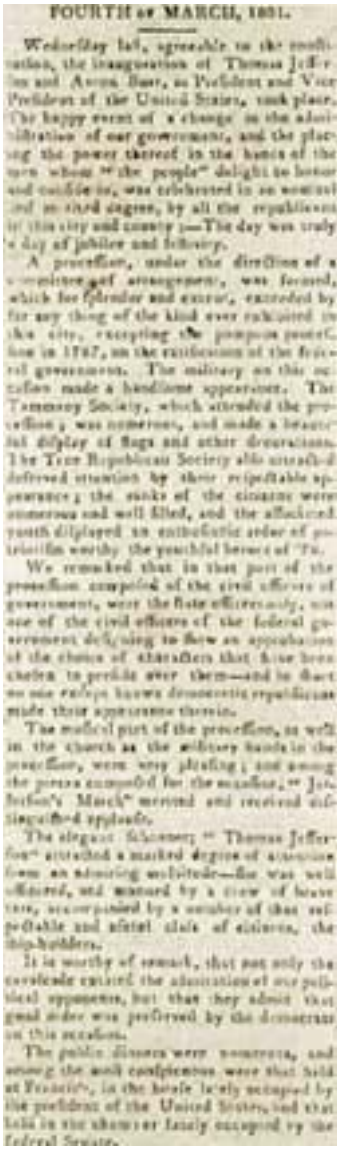
cupines Gazette. Cobbett wrote that Benny Bache was the prostitute son of oil and lamp black, who should be dealt with like a Turk, a Jew, a Jacobin or a dog - and that his newspaper should be suppressed.
Abigail Adams, wife of the president, was more direct: She went into a self-righteous frenzy any time someone mentioned one of Benny's articles about her husband. Abigail would write that Benjamin Bache was expressing the malice of a man possessed by Satan, and was a lying wretch, adding that his abuse leveled against the Government of the United States could plunge this nation into Civil War.
Now, it should be noted that just like today, publishers were just as vicious toward Adams' opposition, particularly Thomas Jefferson. But the Democratic Republicans, who felt that a free press had the right to print any opinion, simply shrugged off printed criticism. Benny was so hated by 1797 that, when he was attacked and seriously beaten on the Philadelphia waterfront, John Adams gave his attacker a diplomatic posting to France.
Still, Abigail Adams had her way. She pushed her husband to stop the bad press he was getting; and in 1798, the Sedition Act was passed, violating the First Amendment by restricting the press. Thomas Jefferson knew that the law was aimed at his friend from Philadelphia.

Benny Bache was arrested before the Act even became law; his bail was set at a phenomenal $4,000. Other publishers who had dared print any opposition to Adams were also arrested and imprisoned - 17 of the 20 Democratic Republican-aligned papers, in all.
Between his paper's losses and the crushing $4,000 bail, Bache was destitute. And then came a miracle, in the form of the American public.

Now, in spite of the fact that subscribing to the Aurora cost $8 a year - a large sum in those days - Americans by the hundreds signed up for subscriptions. More important to Bache, even his deadbeat subscribers started paying their past-due bills. Suddenly, the Aurora became the most popular paper in the country, solely because the public realized that the administration was trying to shut down private citizens' freedom of speech.
Adams had made a serious mistake, targeting Benny and other dissenting publishers. He'd forgotten that the American public would demand the truth.
Things didn't work out in Benny Bache's favor, however. That September, yellow fever spread through Philadelphia; Bache could no longer afford to flee to the countryside to avoid catching the disease. On Monday morning, September 10, 1798, Benny Bache was dead. He was just 29 years of age.
The revolution for the free press in this country led to Jefferson's winning the White House on the next election. One of his first official acts was to pardon all the publishers that had been arrested under the Sedition Act and refund their fines with interest. He also let it be known that a free press would always be an American institution. Jefferson wrote this about our media: "I praise them for sparking a revolution in the public mind, which arrested the rapid march of our government towards Monarchy."

The Aurora was still being published, kept alive by Benny's wife. The First Amendment still stood.

But there's one more part of this story: Benny's full name. For he was born Benjamin Franklin Bache, grandson of Ben Franklin; and it was his grandfather's willing his printing presses to his grandson that created the Philadelphia Aurora.
One last gift from a Founding Father, given to the right man, his grandson, it reminded us all that truth is more important than any political administration's dignity. Benjamin Franklin Bache was the real father of a free American press. He just didn't live long enough to see the impact his child has had on his country since then.


FOURTH of MARCH, 1801.

Wednesday last, agreeable to the constitution, the inauguration of Thomas Jefferson and Aaron Burr, as President and Vice President of the United States, took place. The happy event of a change in the administration of our government, and the placing the power thereof in the hands of the men whom "the people" delight to honor and confide in, was celebrated in an unusual and in a just degree, by all the republicans of this city and county.—The day was truly a day of jubilee and festivity.

A procession, under the direction of a committee of arrangement, was formed, which for splendor and extent, exceeded by far any thing of the kind ever exhibited in this city, excepting the pompous procession in 1787, on the ratification of the federal government. The military on this occasion made a handsome appearance. The Tammany Society, which attended the procession, was numerous, and made a beautiful display of flags and other decorations. The True Republican Society also attended, deferred attention by their respectable appearance; the ranks of the citizens were numerous and well filled, and the attached youth displayed an enthusiastic order of patriotism worthy the youthful heroes of '76.

We remarked that in that part of the procession composed of the civil officers of government, were the state officers only, no one of the civil officers of the federal government declining to show an approbation of the choice of characters that have been chosen to preside over them—and in short no one relique known democratic republicans made their appearance therein.

The musical part of the procession, as well in the church as the military bands in the procession, were very pleasing; and among the pieces composed for the occasion, "Jefferson's March" received and merited distinguished applause.

The elegant Salutatory "Thomas Jefferson" attracted a marked degree of attention from an admiring multitude—he was well delivered, and manned by a view of brevity, accompanied by a number of that respectable and genteel class of citizens, the ship-builders.

It is worthy of remark, that not only the confidence existed the administration of our political opponents, but that they admit that good order was preferred by the democrats on this occasion.

The public dinners were numerous, and among the most conspicuous were that held at Frenchs, in the house lately occupied by the president of the United States, and that held in the theatre lately occupied by the federal Senate.

7. Iraq: History Repeats Itself?

It had been known for centuries as Mesopotamia, and the Ottoman Empire knew that it was best to rule that country separately from its three primary provinces: Mosul, Basra and Baghdad. After all, the Turkish Empire knew that Mosul spoke for the Kurds in the North, Baghdad for the Sunni minority and Basra for the Shi'as in the south.

However, when the League of Nations gave Britain the mandate for Mesopotamia, those three provinces were merged into the modern state of Iraq: "Al-Iraq," meaning the fertile area along a river's banks.

Of course, as the conquering army and mostly benign administration in this newly formed Middle Eastern country, England had its work cut out. The basic problem was how to create a modern democracy - or, failing that, a representative form of government - that could fairly represent and serve all parts of that country's population.

At the time only 3 million people lived in Iraq. The majority were Shi'as like today, 20% were Kurdish in the north, 20% Sunni Muslim and 9% Jewish, Christian or other religious sects.

So, how was it that the minority Sunni came to power so quickly, even under enlightened British rule? Easy: The Sunnis had often been involved in governmental affairs when the Ottoman Empire ruled, so they understood administration. The Shi'ite Muslims in the south, lacking such experience, couldn't easily obtain positions in government - a situation that, eighty years later, still hasn't been rectified.

A couple of quick points: The Treaty of Murdos was the armistice signed between the Allies and the Ottoman Empire that ended the First World War. Because of that treaty, Turkey protested when the province of Mosul was made part of the new Iraq, claiming the British had no authority to take it. But Turkey had lost the war, and England simply ignored its claim to the northern area.

Likewise, in the south, the British had some hard battles around Basra in the opening days of war. But Basra's merchants had long traded with British commercial houses, so once the fighting was over, they quickly re-established their old financial ties with Britons. In fact, it would be fair to say that the people of Iraq were largely happy to see the Ottoman Empire crumble and the Turks leave. But it wouldn't take long before some wanted to see the British leave the exact same way.

The first anti-British group, the Society of Islamic Revival, was formed in early 1918 in Najaf; it recruited members in that city and nearby Kabala. Most Americans had never heard of these cities, a year ago; today you can find them on a world map quicker than you can find Denver City, Texas.

The Kurds were likewise thrilled with the overthrow of the Turks in May of 1918; they even offered their country for rule by England. That didn't last long, either; just one year later, the Kurds proclaimed their country's independence.

But here's the important point: The world agreed that Middle Eastern countries should quickly have their own free and possibly democratic societies, which is exactly what the Anglo-French Treaty of 1918 mandated. The British were simply going to stick around in Iraq to install and educate the newly made Iraqis in democracy - failing that, self rule.

Another key point: The British were by and large sincere and well intended in creating a democratic Iraq.

So, here are the moves the British made. First, they cut deals with the local tribes' leaders in the south to maintain order. That's something that we've also done. They abolished the Ottoman Courts and municipal councils and moved to restore order through a few trusted political officers, police force members and wealthy notables. Yes, we've done that.

The British asked the Iraqis what type of Constitution they wanted. And proving that they were as capable as we are in handling a democracy, the British got so many different opinions from the average citizen that they quit asking.

Gertrude Bell, Oriental Secretary to the British civilian commissioner and the Condi Rice of her day, suggested that the best move would be working with the more moderate Sunnis in Baghdad, instead of with the reactionary Shi'as of the south. Her validation of things already put in motion lasts to this day.

But democracy is a tricky thing. One Ayatollah in Karbala issued a fatwa forbidding employment with the British administration. The Kurds' self-proclaimed independence was put down by the RAF's bombardment, which included the world's first aerial use of chemical weapons. Two other militant groups, the Independence Guard and the al-'Ahd, ran minor guerilla operations into Iraq out of Syria. And, finally, the British brought back an exiled Iraqi, Sayyid Talib al-Naqid, to help oversee the elections for the Constituent Assembly in June of 1920. But al-Naqid had only come home to take advantage of the new opportunities to make money. Let's call him the Ahmed Chalabi of his day.

Again, democracy is a tricky thing. For every Iraqi that the British aligned with, a severe critic arose from the opposition party - and not via an election, but by show of force. By June of 1920, an armed revolt was in full swing in the southern region. The British put it down within months, but not before 6,000 rebels and 500 British soldiers were killed.

By November of 1920 a new Iraqi government had formed under the careful watch of the British. Twenty-one Iraqis from all three provinces were named, not elected, as heads of different agencies. Each was assigned a British colonial officer to teach him the democratic system.

Then lo and behold, the British realized they had been a little hasty in closing down the old Ottoman Courts and municipal councils. Turns out they had actually functioned fairly efficiently. So they were all reopened; and in many cases, they were staffed by the people who had held the posts under the Turks.

So, the British had put down the revolts, reopened the old government agencies and only then realized that democracy - or, failing that, self-rule - is a tricky thing. Therefore, the British needed a single person to commit Iraq to all things international, as in doing business with England.

Also needed was a representative form of government, which could debate to its many hearts' content while representing the people of Iraq. Enter our old friend Faisal, son of Hussein of Mecca; having been a warrior with Lawrence of Arabia, he had just been removed from Syria's throne by the French for being too pro-British.

Faisal is without a doubt one of the more pragmatic Middle Easterners of the last century. He was well liked by all who met him, philosophical and rational; and Faisal knew that previous friendships with the British carried no currency when Imperial interests were at stake.

But, would the Iraqis accept a Saudi Hashemite Arab as their ruler? Sure: The British put together a bogus referendum showing that fully 96% of the population was on board for Faisal's ascendancy to King of Iraq.

King Faisal of Iraq with his British Handlers

More laws were passed to create a democratic state, such as the Electoral Law, in May of 1922, and so was a constitution that separated power within the government. The British drew up treaties that made themselves sound like mere assistants in helping to create this new state, but even the Iraqis knew the British were calling the shots; resentments soon started festering among large parts of the population.

Even Faisal knew he was between a rock and a hard place, and he actually sided with the people

against that particular treaty.

Right then and there, Iraqi Commissioner Sir Percy Cox imposed direct British rule, closed down the radical newspapers, suppressed the opposition's parties, deported opposition leaders and dropped a few more bombs on the tribes in the Euphrates Valley. Good thing Faisal was out with appendicitis. He got the message, though; and, sure enough, in September of 1922, having seen the light, Faisal signed those British treaties.

Still a few major problems: The Kurds wanted to create Kurdistan. The Shi'as of the south, finding that they liked being represented in government, used their majority to start some real payback on the Sunni minority that had oppressed them for so long.

And in December of 1925, enough things were just starting to go right that the League of Nations extended the British mandate of Iraq, to ensure that some form of democracy would last that committed the British to another 25 years in that country.

And, just nine months before that new mandate, the Iraqi Parliament and Faisal even ratified a new concession for their nation's oil ... to the Turkish Petroleum Company.

Now, you're thinking, "How could the Iraqis cut a contract with their old nemesis, the Ottoman Empire and its Turkish Petroleum Company, when it was the British who had saved them and were tutoring them in self rule?"

Here's why. As part of the armistice that ended the war between the Allies and the Ottomans, Turkey had to give the winners that petroleum company. The real owners of the Turkish Petroleum Company were the Anglo-Persian Oil Company: Today its parts are called British Petroleum, Dutch Shell, Francaise des Petroles, Mobil and Standard Oil.

Now, back in 1920, the British had told the Iraqi people that the oil was the property of their new government; English contracts were executed giving Baghdad 20% of the proceeds of sales. But, when the time came to get serious about drilling, England also demanded that the Iraqi government put up 20% of the costs for exploration, pipelines, storage tanks and port facilities. Of course, the Iraqis didn't have that kind of money, so they negotiated for a mere royalty payment for every ton of oil pumped out of the desert.

However, at least a semblance of self-rule appeared, though it was rocky. Faisal died in office in 1933, and his son Faisal II took over. There were the ups and downs in the Middle East, problems of society and so on.

That is, until 1958, when a group of Army officers, calling themselves the Free Officers, decided that it was time to overthrow the constitutional monarchy and install a Republic. It is interesting to note that these men wanted to arrest and try for treason anyone who had ever collaborated with the so-called Imperialists.

That group, led by Abd al-Karim Qasim, attacked Baghdad in July of 1958, seizing all the government buildings and taking over the radio station. The Free Officers forced Faisal the Second and his family out of the palace; they were executed in the street and their bodies torn apart by the mob.

Forty years of trying democracy, or at least self-rule, only to have the whole thing subverted by a military coup. But, at least they learned British administration; everyone agrees that the Iraqis are among the best record keepers in the Middle East. Then Iraq was to be destroyed by their own army, which the British government had created, taught and supplied.

Forty-five years after that overthrow, we've come full circle back to 1918. Three provinces in Iraq that don't get along, suspicions, oil, exiles returning for profit-taking - and foreign administrators to teach them democracy, failing self-rule.

Let's hope this time the world gets it right. But, ultimately, we should remember, that even with the best of intentions, democracy is often a tricky thing.

8. “I’m Back!” The Flu Plague

Over the last few years, although we’re becoming less fearful, publicly our government has been dealing with the possibility of a massive terrorist attack using either chemical or biological weapons. Actually, nature can be even more deadly than terrorism.

Most of us can remember from history class in school the massive catastrophic deaths in the Middle Ages when the Bubonic Plague swept Europe. Not once, not twice, but possibly during three different centuries. Yet, as far as our collective memory is concerned, nothing of the sort has happened since modern medicine has come of age. Sadly, that would be wrong.

For at one time in this country, citizens everywhere rightly lived in fear of an airborne disease that could kill you, your children - or your neighbors. For two years, most people avoided going out in public; walking among the strangers, you constantly wondered and worried that someone you’d just passed had signed your death certificate. And the number of people who would die from this disease will stagger your imagination.

Of course, airborne disease has always been with us; most assuredly, it has changed the course of world and American history more than you might imagine. In 1853, almost 8,000 people died in New Orleans alone from Yellow Fever, which also killed 5,000 people in Memphis that same year. More would have perished, but half the city’s population fled in the face of an uncontrollable and invisible enemy.

And yet, none of these stories can hold a candle to the Influenza Pandemic of 1918 to 1920.

It was called the Spanish Flu, though the name is not based on any known reality. This modern plague started at a military camp in Kansas, Camp Funston, in April of 1918. It was an army cook, Albert Gitchell who first took ill, complaining of flu-like symptoms. And, since Mitchell was one of the camp cooks, he spread the disease rapidly: By noon the next day, another 107 soldiers in the camp were infected. Two weeks later, 522 had the disease.

It should be pointed out that to this day no one knows how this new strain of flu started. It is widely assumed that it was a variation of swine flu that jumped species; others claim that the germ became airborne because the Army burned the 9 tons of manure its animal stock created every day. The current theory is that it might have been some type of avian flu, but no one is really sure.

The one thing we do know is that the flu spread quickly from camp to camp, as our doughboys moved around preparing to move on to Europe and the Great War. This strain of influenza was vicious; within days of contracting the disease the most consuming type of pneumonia would set in, slowly suffocating its victims.

Not too surprisingly, our government said nothing about the massive numbers of American soldiers who were falling ill and dying. Worse, there was no real attempt to isolate people who had caught this modern-day plague. On the contrary, soldiers suffering from the flu were transferred to other camps or shipped out to Europe. Within weeks, every state in the Union reported new cases of infection - and the flu spread around the world within months. Millions died, some say 8 million in just one month: May of 1918.

To fully understand how deadly this disease was, consider this: More American soldiers died from the Influenza plague than in combat during the war. Total American deaths from combat were only 53,000 individuals, but 63,000 soldiers died from the flu. The Flu’s death toll on our civilian population was even more startling.

And the worst was yet to come. From Kansas in the spring of 1918, by September it had already traveled to Europe and come back, to Boston. Now, with people dying in virtually every state, our government was forced to explain to the population what was happening. Well, Washington lied: The public was told that this disease was some form of chemical warfare that Germans had unleashed in Europe and some of our soldiers had brought home to the States.

Thirty days later, in October of 1919, 200,000 people died.

Out of every 1,000 people living in Philadelphia, 158 were killed. Washington DC watched helplessly as 11% of its population contracted the flu and died. Baltimore would post mortality rates of 148 people out of every thousand citizens. In Nome, Alaska, six out of every 10 Native Americans died from the disease.

Before it was over, the Spanish Influenza had affected the lives of almost one in every three Americans.
Of course, by now the government's story that this was an illness caused by German weapons no longer held water. The Red Cross created a national committee on influenza to try to slow down the rate of infection. Atlanta, Georgia, may have been the first to be so proactive as to cancel classes at local schools and universities. During the first wave, infections in Atlanta could be counted in the hundreds. Other towns demanded that travelers present a signed certificate of health before allowing them inside city limits; railroads demanded a similar proof of health.

Funerals in America were held to just 15 minutes, to protect the mourners. Department stores were told not to hold sales, for fear it would put too many people into contact with too many others. Hospitals were so overcrowded with the diseased and dying that a national call went out to employers to allow workers the day off, so they could volunteer for hospital duties at night. Third- and 4th-year medical students were released from their classes to assist those trying to save the living.

6,000,000 DEATHS FROM INFLUENZA

INFLUENZA DEATH RATE IN ONTARIO

Homes where individuals had contracted the disease had to display window placards warning others to stay away. And that meant a lot of homes were off limits, because 20 million Americans caught the disease in 1919 alone.

There were severe shortages - of caskets, of undertakers to prepare the deceased for their funerals, and of gravediggers. In all, between 600,00 and 800,000 Americans died from the flu pandemic between 1918 and 1920 - more on our Eastern seaboard than anywhere else. Two of the most famous victims were the Dodge Brothers; even President Woodrow Wilson contracted the disease in 1919, but he survived.

So many people died that the average lifespan of an American dropped by 10 years in that two-year period. Surprisingly, the majority of people who died of it were between the ages of 15 and 34. Children and the elderly were often spared.

Another unique aspect of this plague is the absence of its story in the military history of the Great War. This could be because the first wave of the flu hit the trenches in France, then spread across Europe, killing more soldiers on both sides than enemy action did. The flu reduced both sides' ranks so much that it likely shortened the war. The disease left devastation wherever it went; most railroads in both France and Germany were shut down, as there were no healthy engineers to pilot the trains. Moreover, the flu kept right on moving around the world: India lost 6 million souls. All port cities doing international trade lost large portions of their populations.

During the time of the Black Death in Europe, when medieval doctors had no real clue about what was happening, it was widely believed that wearing a strong perfume would ward off the illness. Of course that remedy had no effect on the bubonic plague.

However, you remember this nursery rhyme:

"Ring around the rosy, a pocket full of posies, ashes, ashes, we all fall down."

The "ring around the rosy" refers to the buboes, the red, swollen lymph nodes that are the first symptom of the disease. The "pocket full of posies" refers to carrying scented flowers to ward off the disease and mask the smell of death; and "ashes, ashes, we all fall down" was the public's admission that nothing was working to stop the deaths.

Maybe you didn't know it, but the nursery rhyme you learned as a child was written hundreds of years ago, forever memorializing the Bubonic Plague in Europe. Kids are like that; in 1919, children in America were skipping rope to their own plague chant: "I had a little bird, its name was Enza; I opened the window and in-flew-Enza."

Before it was over, more people had died from the flu around the world than were killed in the First World War, somewhere between 25 and 37 million people. In case you were wondering, 10 million soldiers and civilians died in that war.

And then in 1920, just as suddenly as it had appeared, that strain of flu disappeared and never re-

turned. Until now.

No one knows why we kept looking for that strain of flu; most suggest it was for further research into the disease. But in 1997, Army doctors discovered, preserved in formaldehyde, the lungs of an American soldier who had died of that disease in 1918. It took two years, but those doctors isolated the genetic code of that strain of flu. Who knows what they intend to do with it.

Point is, today in America, no one knows that more people died of a disease in 1918 to 1920 than were killed in the Great War. It's rarely mentioned and never talked about. Maybe someone in Homeland Security will rediscover it now; maybe schoolkids will finally hear about what killed so many of their ancestors' loved ones.

9. The Real Captain Kidd

The scariest part of this war on terrorism is the fact that suddenly, mysteriously and probably inaccurately, Al Qaeda is showing up everywhere.

According to recent media stories, Osama's brethren are with the Abu Sayaff in the Philippines; they moved into Chechnya to fight the Russians. In fact, everywhere we want to go fight a battle right now, all we have to do is cry, "My God, Al Qaeda is working with those groups!" and the American public screams approval to Washington to send in troops with the now familiar, "Let's roll."

Now, let's back up a bit and look at those two items. First, just six months ago we were on Russia's back over its war with the Chechens. We believed the Chechens simply wanted their freedom and were willing to fight for it. When stories appeared on the news, we thought the Russians were sadistic in their war with those people. Then a couple of days ago, Washington said, geez, Al Qaeda is fighting with the Chechen army - and suddenly we're on Russia's side: Wipe 'em out.

The Abu Sayaff in the Philippines is another Muslim insurgency on the island of Mindanao. Our troops are already there. Why? Because it's claimed Al Qaeda is helping them with their war.

Give me a break. Before the Spanish American war, meaning over a hundred years ago, Abu Sayaff, then known as the Moros, were engaging in guerilla warfare on the island of Mindanao. We didn't beat them then; no, we took the Philippines by first defeating the Spanish and then the Filipinos on the island of Luzon. Even when I lived in the Philippines in the early sixties, military personnel were told never to visit the island of Mindanao because of the Muslim uprisings. It was off limits.

Consider this: From 1898 to 1947, when we ran the Philippines, and from 1947 to 1992, while we still had a strong military presence there with Subic Bay and Clark Air Force Base, not once did we go to battle in the war being waged on Mindanao. Not once. We couldn't have cared less.

Suddenly, someone said, I think some guy that shook Osama's hand once is on that island, and here we go with the troops.

Which brings us to the point of this story. Our misconception of what a terrorist is and how governmental changes in foreign policy actually create them.

Three hundred and fifty years ago, pirates were considered the world's largest and most vicious terrorist group, if you sailed on the open sea. And guess what? That was the only way to get to America or to get American goods back to European markets. The pirates' reputation then was as bad as, maybe worse than, the terrorists' reputation is today.

The most famous pirate was Captain Kidd; the world breathed a sigh of relief when he was captured, tried and hung in London on May 23rd, 1701.

The problem is this: A great many of the pirates in those days were actually working for the governments of foreign countries. That is, they would sail the seas, stop ships from any country they weren't being paid by, steal their goods and take them back to the pirates' benefactor country, and that government would sell the stolen goods for a profit. Pirates paid by the British government could steal from French, Italian and

Spanish ships, and vice versa.
So most pirates didn't work outside the law; they were government employees. It was officially sanctioned theft.

And Captain William Kidd was the worst of the worst. Now, you're wondering why I'm bringing this up in a segment called the Backside of American History. I'll tell you why: Captain William Kidd was no pirate, at least not as you envision a pirate. He was a New Yorker. A very wealthy New Yorker.

Kidd was born in Scotland in 1645, but emigrated to America after a few years at sea. He married well (that's where most of his fortune came from), and he had a great life in New York City. Then he made his first mistake. During one election, Kidd felt the voting results had been falsified. So he sailed to England to complain to the Crown. During that trip, the King was so impressed with his honesty that Kidd received a royal commission to apprehend pirates who were preying on British trading vessels in the Caribbean and along our Eastern Seaboard. This royal commission was later amended to include the plundering of other nations' trading ships and to broaden Kidd's domain to include the East African coast.

So, our most famous pirate, the most bloodthirsty of them all, turns out to be nothing more than a British civil servant.

Kidd picked up his ship, the Adventure Galley, on February 27, 1696, and arrived back in New York to pick up a crew on July 4th the same year.

And he was off. Captain William Kidd, however, wasn't very good at his new job. It was almost two years later, January 1698, before he scored big. That's when he captured the Armenian ship the Quedagh Merchant off the coast of Madagascar. That ship was much better than his, so Kidd took it as his own and then sailed to the West Indies. Now came the problems.

Captain Kidd hanging in chains.

First, the British navy came calling, though not to arrest Kidd; they knew he was doing his plundering legally. No, they were short of sailors; and at the time the law allowed the British navy to kidnap sailors at sea if needed.

But Kidd was also short of crew just then, so he simply ducked out, refusing to stop his ship because he knew the British navy would take his best men. Naturally, the British Navy in turn complained to the Crown about Kidd's selfishness.

The second problem was that the Quedagh Merchant belonged to Muklis Khan, a very influential citizen in the Middle Eastern establishment. And he knew that Kidd worked for England, so he demanded that the British Crown make restitution for its theft of his property.

The third problem was that times were changing; the days of governments' commissioning individuals to plunder the ships of other nations were coming to an end. Piracy and privateering were being replaced by legal trade between nations.

And suddenly, most pirates, whom everyone knew were government agents, were cast as what you and I now believe they were: Bloodthirsty cutthroats, terrorists of the sea. In turn, every government that had employed them now denied having had anything to do with the pirates' actions. That's kind of like when Saddam, Osama and Noriega were our best buddies in the eighties, but now we deny we ever supported them.

Kidd found out he was wanted for piracy when he arrived in Hispaniola. Immediately, he sailed back to New York and went to the Governor, the Earl of Bellomont. Kidd told the governor of his innocence and produced his royal commission allowing him to pirate for the King of England. Bellomont told Kidd, whom he knew, not to worry as his affairs were in order. Then, days later, Bellomont had Kidd arrested and sent to England for trial.

Kidd's only defense was that he was working for the King of England under royal commission. The

prosecution demanded he produce that document; if he had it, fine, he was innocent. Of course Bellomont had never given it back, so Kidd couldn't produce the document. Sure, the King of England knew Kidd was under his employ, but he denied it.

The media portrayed Kidd as the vilest and most vicious form of human, not as the wealthy and respectable New Yorker he really was. Lacking the proof in that document, he was convicted. And hung.

Why? To get the message out: legal trade was in and the old days of stealing for your national economy were out. And to this day, no one realizes that many pirates were government agents. That knowledge is often suppressed, replaced by the stories of their criminal thievery.

Well, there's one last twist to this story. Where was that Royal Commission that would have cleared Kidd of those crimes committed in the name of the King of England? Bellomont claimed he didn't have it, and the King of England denied knowing anything about it, and so history remembers Kidd as a vicious criminal.

Not so fast. A hundred and fifty years later historians found that Royal Commission to our New Yorker, William Kidd. It turns out that Governor Bellomont had given the document to the British prosecutors, who then won Kidd's conviction. They had it all the time, and refused to lose their case by letting the judge know Kidd was innocent.

William Kidd was just a victim of a government's change of direction. One life given to get the government out of a bind.

Again, that's just like what happened in the eighties; we paid Saddam to fight Iran, paid Osama to fight the Russians in Afghanistan, and paid Noreiga to keep the Panama Canal safe.

But you'd never know today that those people were even once on our side, much less our best allies. They were made outcasts by a change in governmental policy. Just like the pirate, William Kidd.

10. Separate But Unequal

Lately there's been a great deal of discussion over a water fountain in downtown Dallas; you know the one, where they discovered the "Whites Only" sign over it. A reminder of the days of Jim Crow laws, the separate but equal laws that made bigotry, racism and hate sound so darn reasonable.

Of course, there's a story behind how the United States Supreme Court came to rule racial segregation as Constitutional in 1896, reversing thirty years of integration and setting the stage for almost seventy years of racial intolerance in this county.

Keep in mind that, in the aftermath of the Civil War, laws and Constitutional Amendments made blacks the equals of whites in this country. Maybe more than equal in the South, blacks got the right to vote, which many Southern whites at first lost because of their contributions to the Civil War.

Still, visitors to New Orleans during the period of 1870 to 1890 were surprised to see whites and blacks sitting side by side at restaurants, saloons, gaming halls, hardware stores and yes, even in brothels. And while many said the easy intermixing of the races had to be based on New Orleans' French background, that situation was common in numerous Southern cities.

In 1885, two books were written on the subject of the new South. One was by a black Northern journalist, T. McCants Stewart, who by his own admission had headed to the South with a chip on his shoulder, and had come away with another impression altogether. Riding the train south from Columbia, South Carolina, Stewart wrote, "I feel about as safe here as in Providence. I can ride in first-class cars on the railroads and in the streets. I can stop in and drink a glass of soda and be more politely waited upon than in some parts of New England."

George Washington Cable wrote the book The Silent South that same year. Born in Louisiana and a former Confederate officer, Cable stated flatly that the only way the South would rise again would be if both races were advanced equally. Cable added that "enforced inequality for blacks would in turn corrupt the new governments being set up."

Of course, the real problems between the races came from the whites at the lowest end of the economic scale. Blinded by their frustration or their situation in life, they just knew that somehow or another,

poor blacks had it better. As the head of the Texas Populist Party said, “Blacks are in the ditch just like we are.”

Then again, 1885 may have marked the high point for the two races in the South, for soon after that came the first of the Jim Crow laws, based on segregation policies first enforced in the Northern States. That’s right, separate rail cars and schools, and exclusion of blacks from the best restaurants and hotels, were Northern phenomena. They were only copied by the South.

`Segregation would gain momentum because of a ruling by the Supreme Court in 1883, that the Constitution afforded no protection against discrimination by individuals or private businesses. Jim Crow was on his way.

Florida was first with a Jim Crow law covering the rails in 1887. Trains were obvious: long distances at close quarters; and it was easy for rail owners to add another car to comply with the law. Mississippi followed in 1888, then Texas in 1889. North and South Carolina and Virginia held out, waiting to see if these new laws could stand a court case. But it was Louisiana’s law for segregated trains that would end up in the Supreme Court, for in Louisiana’s 1890 law we find the words we all know by heart today: Trains had to provide “equal but separate accommodations.”

The New Orleans Crusader newspaper took up the challenge of this new form of discrimination and called on Albion Wingegar Tourgee, a former Union officer. A carpetbagger but a respected jurist, Tourgee had practiced in North Carolina to handle a future legal challenge to Louisiana’s law. Tourgee agreed to take the case, and the two parties decided that they would have to set up someone to be arrested for violating this new rail law, which wasn’t going to be easy. You see, the rail owners in the South didn’t agree with the law. They hadn’t had many complaints over this issue and frankly, it was going to cost them more money to add cars to their trains to comply with the segregation order.

Here’s the setup. First the rail owner had to agree to be the legal test case; then they needed a black volunteer willing to be arrested — and then a sympathetic white rail passenger would have to file the complaint.

On February 24, 1892, Daniel Desdunes boarded a train from New Orleans to Mobile, Alabama, and was arrested for attempting to sit in the Whites Only section. Tourgee and the citizens’ group assembled by the Crusader started putting together their court case. It didn’t go far; in May of 1892, the Louisiana Supreme Court, hearing a case brought by the Pullman Company, ruled in their favor that Jim Crow segregation laws were illegal as they interfered with interstate commerce. That’s right, if someone were traveling state to state, the law didn’t apply. Some saw that as a victory in dismantling these new laws, but the Louisiana Supreme Court also said, “The law stands, within the state’s boundaries.”

The next month, Homer Plessy agreed to be the person who challenged the law in Louisiana. He too was arrested; in the first court case, the Judge ruled that equal but separate didn’t violate any Constitutional Laws. Homer Plessy was guilty as charged.

It went to the Louisiana Supreme Court, but by then the Chief Justice was Francis Nichols, the former governor of the state, who had signed that piece of Jim Crow legislation into law. And again, Homer Plessy was found guilty.

It was time for action in the nation’s highest court, but Tourgee felt a real concern; he wrote, “Our Supreme Court has always been the foe of liberty until forced to move on by public opinion.” Tourgee believed that in time, the public at large would become outraged over this injustice to the newest Americans, but shortly he would be proven wrong.

It probably didn’t help that the nation had fallen into its worst depression in 1893, and the public is usually less tolerant in tough times. By now the case was known as Plessy vs. Ferguson, Ferguson being the trial judge in the first case.

The Supreme Court heard the case in 1896. Tourgee made his points well and predicted the future of the South and America accurately.

He spoke of mixed marriages, where husbands and wives couldn't ride together in the same train car. He noted that trains are legally common carriers and therefore couldn't discriminate by law. He told the justices that equal but separate meant nothing when one race hovered above the other and in time, there would be nothing equal about the facilities granted the minority race. In his summation, Tourgee said this: "Justice is pictured blind and her daughter, the Law, ought to at least be color-blind."

On May 18th, 1896, by a 7-1 ruling the Supreme Court affirmed Louisiana's Jim Crow train law. The one dissenting vote was magnificent. It came from Justice John Marshall Harlan, who wrote that this law enacted slavery again by making the minority subservient; he said that its intent was not to exclude whites from the colored cars but the reverse, and that is discrimination; finally, he added that the law is the law, and each man is equal before it. Justice Henry Billings Brown wrote the majority opinion; he dismissed the idea that if this law were enforced, other absurd and arbitrary segregation laws would pass in the future. Man, that guy had his finger on the pulse of the nation.

Brown also dismissed the equal protection for all races intent of the 13th, 14th and 15th Amendments as being invalid in this case.

Needless to say, things got worse in the South for decades because of that Supreme Court ruling. Now, something that you might not have considered: Once equal rights again became the law of the land and rigidly enforced, the South came back, starting in 1970. And now our growth is unstoppable.

One last piece of the story you might not have known: Homer Plessy, the man arrested for sitting in the Whites Only section of that Louisiana train, was white. That's right, Homer Plessy had only a fraction of black blood in him, he was 7/8 Caucasian. And that was the setup: having a white guy who was only a fraction black be denied space in a Whites Only car. Just to show the absurdity of the situation. In fact, Plessy was so white, he had to inform people that he was marginally black by a maternal great grandmother. That alone should have won the case but failed badly.

Plessy returned to obscurity, sold life insurance and passed away in 1925. Never a victim of discrimination himself, due to his skin color, he fought for the rights of others and failed.

11. The Voice of the Revolution

You do know the author of this political statement? "Some writers have confused society with government, as to leave little or no distinction between them. Whereas they are not only different, but have different origins. For Society is produced by our wants and Government produced by our wickedness."

Those words are as accurate today as they were when they were written, 228 years ago. Yet you don't know the author's name, even though he, more than anyone else, inspired this country to break away from England. In fact, his writings would in time have a real impact on our own revolution, ruin the power of the British Monarchy and help start the French Revolution.

OK, maybe you remember this, his most famous opening line: "These are the times that try men's souls." It is, of course, from Thomas Paine's book, The Crisis.

You remember Thomas Paine, the man who crystallized the thoughts of liberty in the minds of most of today's free world. And yet you know absolutely nothing about the man, in spite of what he's done for us all. Worse, he's been all but written out of our history - simply because, at the end of his life, he had far too many enemies. Those enemies successfully kept his position of greatness from being honored by those his words helped free.

Thomas Paine was born in 1737 in Thetford, England, outside of London. His father, who was a serious, devoted Quaker, was the town's corset maker, so young Thomas learned that trade as a child. In his teens Thomas became a world-class hellion, running away from home for a life at sea; but then he returned to England, married his childhood sweetheart and acted as if he was going to settle down. And, had his wife lived, we might never have heard of him. But she died when they were both in their early twenties, leaving Paine in a state of serious depression that his new addiction to alcohol only made worse.

He had borrowed the money to open his own corset shop, but he lost it in a drunken binge. So, in quick succession, he held a series of jobs: a tax collector, fired; a teacher, too constraining; a preacher after he

was born again, then back to tax collecting - where once more he was fired, only this time he took it personally.

Now he hated government bureaucracy and certainly King George. In fact, if you had hung out in the White Hart Tavern most any night, you would have been treated to an amazingly drunken Thomas Paine, holding court and propounding his theory that no man had any divine right to rule another.

He took to writing poetry. No one bought it, but it did bring him to the attention of a man running for Parliament, who paid Paine 3 guineas to write his campaign song for him.

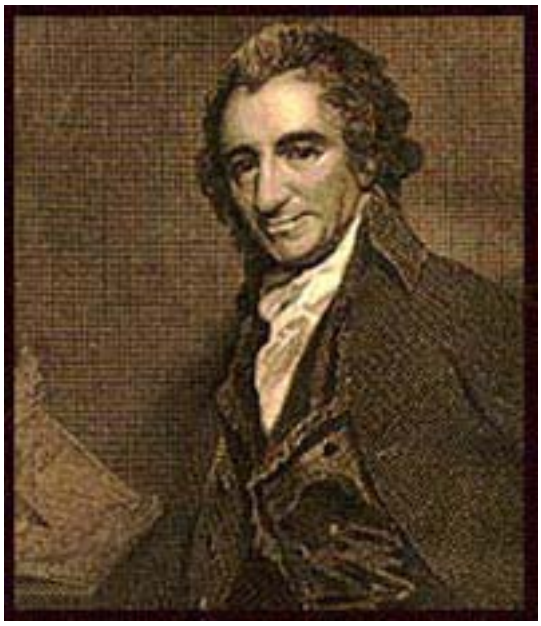
The song was a huge success; the client was elected to Parliament. And suddenly, our drunken radical was much in demand as a writer of inflammatory campaign speeches.

And then, just as he was finding his place in the world, into London walked Benjamin Franklin, our colonial envoy to the court. It was Franklin who suggested to Paine that a man of his talents was needed in the colonies.

Late in 1774, Thomas Paine came to America to edit the Pennsylvania Magazine, where he discovered that already he faced a problem. You see, our wealthy ancestors really didn't want to break with England; they simply wanted parity with the British upper class. To Paine's way of thinking, that was no revolution at all, just a bunch of old conservatives complaining that they weren't getting their fair share of excess wealth. So Paine decided to up the ante by adding the word "independence" to the argument, both in his magazine and in January of 1776, in his pamphlet "Common Sense."

Because the thoughts expressed in the pamphlet were against the Crown and thus treasonous, it was signed "An Englishman." Immediately, 500,000 copies sold at 2 shillings a piece, making Thomas Paine a very wealthy man.

When King George read "Common Sense" it enraged him, and His Majesty thought Ben Franklin had written it. British authorities here told the King that the pamphlet was the work of John Adams; but it was Thomas Jefferson who spilled the beans. When he was accused of being the author, Jefferson responded, "Not I, but the only person who writes as well, Thomas Paine."



It was the book that moved our nation; it still is the book that defines liberty for the individual all over the world, whether here or in places such as Afghanistan and Iraq.

Paine served for a time in the army. He gave money to the cause whenever he could, including $500 for Washington's army; and, at the end of the conflict, our grateful nation gave Thomas Paine his own farm, in New Rochelle, New York.

So he moved into a new career as a would-be engineer, and he designed a bridge without any piers. He believed his design would revolutionize all bridge work, but money was a bit short in the U.S. So he went home to England to raise the cash, and there once again ran into the bureaucracy of the British Crown.

It seemed to trigger something in him. He started inciting to riot to overthrow the King, while he was in England. He was immediately indicted for treason and was forced to flee to France. Good timing. The French had just about had as much fun as they could stand with Louis XVI, so guess who became the writer who inspired the French Revolution? That's right, our own Thomas Paine.

France loved him so much that he was soon on the National Assembly in France; but there his life soon started taking a turn for the worse. The French were out for revenge on the King - and most had misunderstood Paine's writings. He had never advocated violence against those who had ruled as tyrants; no, he simply said all mankind should be set free from those who had opposed them. Well, in France, they wanted blood.

In the Assembly, Thomas Paine stood up as the best that mankind is and should be, demanding the monarchy

go, but not the revenge, saying, “I would rather record a thousand errors dictated by humanity, than one of severe justice.” He finished with the line, “Kill the king, but not the man.”

For that position, Thomas Paine was sentenced to death and put in Luxembourg Prison for execution. The only reason he lived is that the guard assigned to him marked the wrong side of his jail door, so the executioner would never come. Paine would stay in that prison for 11 months, until James Monroe, our French Ambassador, secured his release. A thankful Thomas Paine came home to his farm in New York.

One of his later works, Age of Reason, an attack on organized religion, made his enemies call him an atheist; but, like all of our Founding Fathers, Paine was a Deist, not an atheist. When he died at 73 years of age in 1809, he was refused burial in the local Quaker cemetery because of his beliefs; so he was interred on his farm.

When anyone talks about giving people their freedom and liberty, they are quoting the works of Thomas Paine. His writings are credited with effecting our breaking away from England and the British Reform Act of 1832, with reducing the power of the monarchy. His passion helped bring liberty to France; and, in gratitude, they gave us the Statue of Liberty, to honor Paine’s influence on the world. And one would think that Paine’s grave would be one of America’s cherished historical places today, but it’s not: Actually, we don’t have a clue where he is.

William Cobbett, one of England’s most vicious right-wing conservatives, at first unremittingly savaged Paine’s works because of their idiotic concept of individual liberty. He wrote pamphlets and spoke of the dangers of Paine’s foolish and idealistic liberalism.

But then, when he saw the damage to the British poor at the start of their industrial revolution, Cobbett realized that in fact, Paine had been right. So his former worst enemy, William Cobbett, became the man who would carry on Thomas Paine’s work. He preached against the unrestrained power of the wealthy elite and the British Crown, and his writings got him jailed for two years. In 1817, he fled to America, where, like any good Pilgrim, he immediately went to the grave of his hero - and he was shocked. He wrote, “Paine lies in a little hole under the grass and weeds of an obscure farm in America, there, however he should not lie, unnoticed, much longer. For he belongs to England. His fame is the property of England, and if no other people will show that they value that fame, the people of England will.”

Cobbett believed that America had badly mistreated the man who had roused it to demand independence. He meant to return Paine’s body to England; he would build a monument there to Paine, one to which the tired, hungry and desperately poor would come and realize that here lay their hero also.

So, Cobbett simply dug up the body of Thomas Paine. Well, not quite simply; he had a few problems. The least was that he had no money for a monument; so he decided to take the body of Thomas Paine on tour across England and use the ticket sales to build his final resting place.

But no one came to the grave robber’s spectacle. Lord Byron was one of those laughing at Cobbett’s folly, writing a poem about him.

In digging up your bones, Tom Paine
Will Cobbett has done well
You visit him on earth, again
He’ll visit you in hell.

Desperate for money, Cobbett tried to sell locks of Thomas Paine’s hair, but little of it sold. And so the literary hero of our own American Revolution was put into a box and shoved under William Cobbett’s bed, where he stayed until Cobbett died in 1835. Cobbett’s son inherited the body, but was shortly thereafter sent to debtor’s prison. A British court ruled that Thomas Paine’s body was not an asset for sale and returned it in time to young Cobbett.

He in time lost the body of Thomas Paine, and it’s never been found since.

And so we know little of the life of Thomas Paine, the man who wrote the book on liberty, freedom for all and man’s independence from the past. Thanks to his most fervent admirer, who had good intentions but little brains or cash, today can we can’t celebrate Thomas Paine, the man who helped free us, England and France from the era of kings.

12. They Liked Their Indian Neighbors

The story of Native Americans in this country is at best one of shame. For the reality is that in the beginning, without the help of the North American Indian, it is doubtful that the first colonists could even have survived here.

Indians taught our British ancestors how to farm the soil and what crops would grow. They became our guides into the frontiers; and, in a short time, the very success of our colonies made us believe that it was necessary to move the Indians out of their own homeland for our expansionist programs.

Of course we made many treaties with the Indians, and most of them we broke. They were taken off their lands and relocated again and again. Some government agents were known to infect goods such as blankets with smallpox, to which it was well known that the Indians had no natural immunity.

But in 1873, one American city fought back. They got the federal government to leave the Indians in their community alone and stopped their deportation to reservations far away.

The Winnebago tribe had once covered America from Iowa to Wisconsin. Our first treaty with them was in 1840, when the Winnebagos agreed to move to reservations west of the Mississippi. However, in spite of that treaty and a second one signed in 1846, the Wisconsin Winnebagos refused to leave their native lands in the southern part of the state.

It was about this time that the town of Reedsburg, Wisconsin, was founded. Over the next three decades the town would grow, mostly due to the German immigrants who took up farming in the area.

And, while the British colonials were extremely territorial toward Native Americans, the German immigrants in and around Reedsburg became fast friends with their Indian neighbors.

One Winnebago chief was Blue Wing, who had welcomed the Germans to Wisconsin. Most written accounts of Blue Wing include testaments to his good nature, his integrity and his kindness to those in need. When Blue Wing traveled, he was always invited to stay in the homes of white families in the area. Such was the trust between the two groups.

More than that, Blue Wing had become — an American citizen. He was also a landowner in the Wisconsin Dells.

It should also be noted that many members of the Winnebago tribe had served the Union Army as scouts during the Civil War, including Blue Wing, Ah Ha Cho Ka and Sunday Chief. After the war they returned to their families and farms in Wisconsin.

Of course, treaties are treaties; in August of 1873, the government met with the Winnebagos and informed them that they would be forced to leave Wisconsin for a reservation in Nebraska. The fact that many were landowners or, like Blue Wing, American citizens, meant nothing to Washington.

When Blue Wing refused the government's orders to move his tribe, Captain S.A. Hunt was sent down from Sparta to enforce the deportation.

It was early December of 1873 when Hunt and 51 soldiers rounded up the Winnebago Indians from the Wisconsin Dells around Reedsburg and prepared to move them to the local train station for the forced relocation.

Then, two days before Christmas, word spread through Reedsburg about the army's actions. The day after Christmas the entire town marched to meet the army and their Indian captives at the rail station to protest. The army was forced to back down that day.

The local paper, the Reedsburg Free Press wrote: "Our people were mad when it was first known, and as the day progressed they got madder and madder." The normally docile people of Reedsburg had turned into an angry mob.

The citizens then went to their local judge and had an order issued forbidding the army from deporting the Winnebagos.

The legal fight continued for months. And in April of 1874, the citizens of Reedsburg won their legal battle to save their friends, the Winnebagos. The Indians of that tribe were exempted from the treaties and allowed to live their lives out with their friends, the German immigrants of southern Wisconsin.

It may be the only case of an American city standing up to Washington to protect Native Americans.

And we should point out that most of the Germans living in Reedsburg that stood down the Army were not American citizens, unlike many of the Indians they saved. The irony is wonderful.
It was the best Christmas gift ever to an Indian tribe.

13. Disaster in New York Part 1

Can you name America's worst maritime disaster during a time when this nation was at peace? Most would say the Titanic, maybe the Lusitania, and while both of those shipwrecks involved an incredible loss of life, not that many on board lived in this country. Certainly it's a fact that 1,517 people lost their lives on the Titanic, 1,201 on the Lusitania — and everyone today remembers those disasters.
So, why is it that you've never heard the story of the General Slocum?

The General Slocum, a 250-foot-long excursion steamer, was launched in 1891. The ship suffered a number of minor mishaps during its career, but year after year it passed its scheduled inspections.
Today we know it as New York's East Village, but in 1904 the area was called Kleindeutschland, or Little Germany, so named because of the 80,000 German immigrants living there. Germans had been arriving here since 1840; in Kleindeutchland, you could go street after street and never hear a word of English. German theaters, businesses and beer gardens were everywhere. And at the center of their community was St. Mark's Lutheran Church on East 6th Street. It was the heart of Little Germany, and St. Mark's held an annual outing for its congregation to celebrate the end of the Sunday School year.

It was a Sunday morning, June 15, 1904 to be exact, when more than 1,300 members of St. Mark's Lutheran Church boarded the General Slocum at the Third Street Pier. They looked forward to a leisurely cruise up the East River to Locust Grove on Huntington Bay. Mostly the women and children of the church, all were excited about their day of Christian fun out in the country, getting their children out of the crowded city.

Only one small incident marred the boarding; Mrs. Philip Straub was moving up the gangway when she had a sudden premonition of death. She told others nearby of her fears and refused to continue on the trip. A man standing next to her grabbed his wife and five children and herded them quickly ashore.
By 9:30 the General Slocum had pulled out of her berth and was slowly moving upstream. In all she carried 1,331 passengers, more than 500 of them under 20 years of age. As their families waved from shore, a band started playing German music and the kids started dancing.

But all was not well. Down in the engine room, the church had placed boxes of glasses packed in straw, which quickly caught fire. Now in spite of the fact that those boxes were in the wrong place, a small fire should have been easy enough to put out. But there were problems: the fire hoses on the General Slocum were still the original ones from 1891, and when the untrained crew tried to use them, the hoses burst from the pressure.

As the boat passed East 90th Street around 10:00, 12-year-old Frank Perditsky ran up to Captain William Van Schaick, screaming, "Mister, the ship's on fire!" The Captain dismissed it as a prank and yelled at the boy, "Get the hell out of here and mind your own business."
Prank it wasn't. Already citizens on the shore, just 300 yards away, were shouting to the passengers of the General Slocum, warning them that the ship was ablaze. And within minutes, Captain Van Schaick realized that the boy had been right; not only was his ship nearly engulfed in flames, but already some of his passengers were running around on fire.

Then came his most important decision: Capt. Van Schaick decided not to put the General Slocum in at the pier seconds away, because it was near a gas refinery. Instead he chose to beach her on North Brother

Island, near today's La Guardia Airport, nearly a mile distant.

Of course, with most of the ship on fire, so close to shore, it would seem logical for the passengers to simply jump into the East River and swim to safety. The problem was that most didn't know how to swim; those who did would have had a hard time swimming in their Sunday best.

So the adult passengers, desperate to save their children, tried to lower the lifeboats. They couldn't. The boats were wired down and had so many coats of paint over their locks, they couldn't be pried loose. The passengers grabbed for life jackets, but they were either nailed in place or secured behind heavy wire, so passengers couldn't steal them. And those who finally managed to get a few life jackets for the children found that, after 13 years, their cork had turned to sawdust and had no buoyancy. Worse yet, the manufacturer had made them too light to meet city standards, so he'd quietly hidden little metal bars inside of them so they'd pass the weight inspection. Every one of the passengers who managed to get a life jacket jumped overboard and instantly sank to the bottom of the East River.

The crew, virtually to a man, abandoned ship.

There were heroes, of course; many of the New York tugboats moved into action and plucked passengers out of the river. One tug even caught fire when it pulled alongside the General Slocum, yet its brave crew continued to rescue passengers still on the ship. As for Captain Van Schaick, the second his boat grounded itself on North Brother Island, he jumped onto another tug, safe.

North Brother Island was home to a City Health Hospital, where patients like Typhoid Mary were quarantined for infectious diseases. Many of the patients, some in critical condition, did what the Captain refused to do; they jumped out of their beds and into the river to save as many people as they could. Mary McCann and Nellie O'Donnell, both ill with measles, saved 30 people that day.

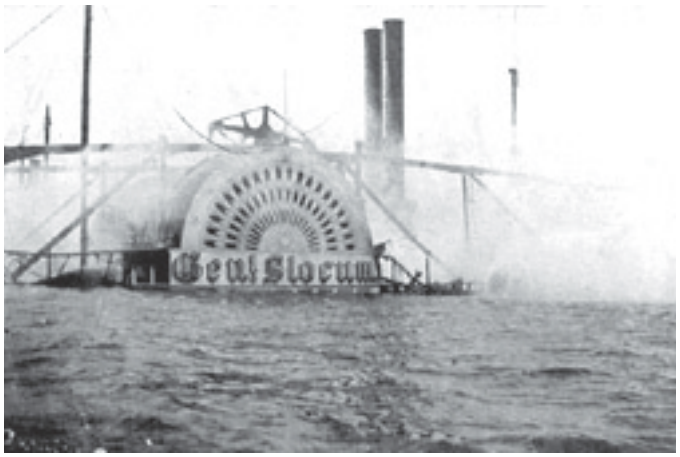
LIST OF SLOCUM'S DEAD
NOW MAY REACH 1,000

Only three crewmembers tried to save the passengers. George Conklin, an engineer, pulled 12 people to shore; he himself drowned while going back for the 13th.

And in spite of help from the tugboats, the hospital patients and passersby on shore, 1,021 people died that day, drowned in the river or burned to death on the General Slocum. It was and is America's worst peacetime maritime disaster; other than 9/11, it was New York's worst disaster for loss of life.

At a temporary morgue laid out near the pier, families came and tried to identity their loved ones, either by look, or in most cases by jewelry they were known to be wearing. Almost 70 were never claimed by their loved ones.

Virtually everyone in New York's Kleindeutschland community lost either a family member or a close friend. The community's pain was so great that, rather than stay and deal with it, soon its remaining citizens would disperse from the area to other American cities, as if moving would dull the emotions. By 1910, few German families remained.



So how is it that the General Slocum's was the worst disaster, and yet no one knows about it now? Certainly at the time it was covered in papers across America. But those 1,031 women and children, who died within a couple hundred yards of shore, right in New York, have vanished from the papers of history.

Two reasons. First, most of the Germans in Kleindeutschland were immigrants, as were most on the boat that day. Second and most important,

when the First World War came along within the decade, anti-German hysteria ran rampant; it no longer mattered that those 1,031 people had died that day.

And yes, because of that disaster, hearings were held and recommendations made to prevent a large ship disaster from ever happening again. Though the new rules did some good, they were forgotten eight years later when the Titanic sank.

The worst New York disaster, outside of 9-11. I just thought you'd like to know that it had happened.

14. Disaster in New York Part 2

Listen carefully to this quote:

The lessons to America are clear as day. We must not again be caught napping with no adequate national intelligence organization. The several federal bureaus should be welded into one, and that one should be eternally and comprehensively vigilant.

That warning almost sounds like the discussion on creating the Office of Homeland Security, but it's not. The words were spoken by Arthur Woods, the police commissioner of the City of New York, all the way back in 1919.

No, 9/11 wasn't the first attack on New York City. In fact, when New York was first attacked 88 years ago, the explosion was so severe that it was felt in Philadelphia; shrapnel flew into the Statue of Liberty, all the windows in lower Manhattan were blown out, and it rocked the Brooklyn Bridge. And no one has ever been arrested or tried for the crime. More important, this was the event that first made the Statue of Liberty unstable. And yet, though a ring of American flags has marked ground zero since that attack, few if any Americans know the story of one bad day on Black Tom Island.

The Great War had erupted across Europe in July of 1914, a war that easily could have been avoided. But, as noted historian Barbara Tuchman wrote in her magnificent book on the subject, the participants made so many blunders and misjudgments that it was "a constant march of folly."

When the war broke out, Her Majesty's Royal Navy successfully blockaded all of Germany's ports. The idea was not just to lock in the German navy, it was to starve Germany's citizens into extinction. More than 100 German ships, unable to go home, immediately set sail for the neutral harbors of America.

Yes, neutral. In the beginning, the vast majority of Americans wanted nothing to do with this war. Wars had been going on for centuries between European countries; this was just one more, as far as we were concerned. In fact, it would never have been called a "world war" if America hadn't finally entered it. Just another European war, begun stupidly for stupid reasons.

But, in spite of our declared neutrality, there was nothing neutral about our position. American factories were building and shipping war materiel to England, France and Russia virtually nonstop, and the Germans knew it. So, on February 4, 1915, Berlin gave the order for unrestricted submarine warfare: sink any ship, under any flag, that could be running materiel to the Allies. Of course, as much as we hate the idea, under international law, the Germans were right in demanding that we cease supplying the Allies or face the consequences. Furthermore, our government knew that Germany was within its legal rights; and that's why, even though the stakes had been raised, we didn't declare war on Germany then.

Franz von Papen was a German military attaché working in Washington. And around that same time, he had been instructed by Germany's General Staff to begin carrying out sabotage operations against any American factory or target of opportunity that was building or shipping war supplies. Fortunately for us, von Papen had never been trained in clandestine activities. He was fairly incompetent and got nothing accomplished.

Two months later, however, Captain Franz von Rintelen arrived in this country, traveling with a Swiss passport. Von Rintelen wasn't a trained saboteur, either, but he was creative about bringing the war to America. Remember all those German ships taking refuge in New York Harbor? That's right. Within weeks of his arrival, von Rintelen had managed to enlist the aid of many of the German sailors; on shore leave, they were hanging out in the local bars. And he invented the pencil bomb - a simple cigar-shaped incendiary device that

blew up many ships when they were far out at sea. But that summer he received a telegram calling him back to Berlin for consultations. Now, some historians speculate that Scotland Yard had concocted the coded communiqué; most believe that we intercepted and deciphered the message that caused von Rintelen to set sail on a Dutch steamer. Whatever its source, the British stopped the neutral ship at sea and took von Rintelen into custody, eventually sending him back for trial in the U.S.

On the other hand, the British had to let Von Papen pass when he was expelled from America in late 1915: He had diplomatic immunity. Unfortunately for him, his luggage didn't; seizing it, the British found it contained papers concerning certain German espionage activities on our soil.

Coded papers, found by the agents shadowing him in a briefcase that the German "commercial attaché" stupidly left in an elevated train, had given us a few clues about what the Germans were up to. But we were forced to turn over much of the investigation to the New York City Police Department. Yet, fortunately, with 2.5 million German immigrants in this country, many were already on the force in New York. Speaking perfect German, German American police officers hung out in the bars that von Rintelen had recruited in and soon busted most of those who were involved in plots against our country. But, as would soon become obvious, they didn't get them all.

A place called the Hansa Haus in Baltimore was a gathering spot for those working the docks there; it was close enough to Washington that German diplomats could attend the private meetings in the third-floor attic. Baltimore had been chosen when New York City got to be too hot to operate in. And here was Paul Hilken, who had taken von Rintelen's place as the top German agent. Hilken was doing a far better job. First he managed to get Edward Felton, head of the African American stevedores union, on board; Felton's workers hid egg bombs, carrying acid and the like, on munitions ships so they'd burn at sea. And Anton Dilger, a surgeon at John Hopkins University, signed up. Dr. Dilger isolated and grew containers of anthrax, which were used to inoculate horses and mules headed for the front in France - the first terrorist anthrax attack in history.

But, at 2:08 in the morning on Sunday, July 30, 1916, the worst happened. On a mile-ling pier on Black Tom Island, on the New Jersey side of New York Harbor, rail cars filled with fuel and between 2 and 4 million pounds of ammunitions waited, ready to be loaded onto ships bound for the Allies. In the fire that was started, all that fuel blew - and all that ammo went off. In fact, they kept exploding all night, terrifying and jarring people for a 50-mile radius; and when dawn arrived both Black Tom Pier and Black Tom Island were gone.

That day America found that it had lost 85 freight cars; 24 three-story buildings were leveled - and 12 barges, three tugs and six piers destroyed, not to mention all the cargo. The Statue of Liberty was hit by the explosion's shrapnel. All of the windows in Lower Manhattan were shattered; tombstones toppled in cemeteries. That explosion woke up individuals as far away as Maryland.

EXTRA THE JERSEY JOURNAL EX

BIG MUNITIONS EXPLO SION AT BLACK TOM; 50 BELIEVED DEAD; 21 HURT, IN CITY HOSPITAL; DAMAGE $75,000,(

The people of New York and across the harbor in New Jersey ran outside to see what was the largest fireball ever known to man at the time, probably affecting them like watching the towers fall on 9/11 affected us. Most surprising - and more than likely because it happened in the middle of the night - while the explosion injured hundreds, it killed only four; one was a baby, miles away, thrown violently out of his crib. And the body the captain of a barge loaded with munitions, which had been docked illegally at the mile-long pier, washed ashore six weeks later.

Attacks continued; a car factory making munitions in

New Jersey and many other plants were damaged. Before we had even entered the war, it's estimated, those large-scale attacks on American industry had cost more than $1.5 billion in today's currency.
The British sent von Rintelen back to New York to stand trial for the attack on New York harbor. But, with little actual evidence on hand, all we could try him for was attempting to start strikes on the docks to prevent munitions from being loaded onto ships. He was the only spy ever convicted of violating the Sherman Anti-trust Act.

But this all-out attack on New York City had its effect. More than likely it - not the Zimmerman Telegram - was the pivotal moment in our entering the war.
It also put into motion many other events that affected America's future.

After the Great War was over, we filed reparations claims against the German government for the damage done to New York and American industry. And the backlash against all Germans because of the Black Tom Island explosion forced many to Anglicize their names, going from Schmidt to Smith and so on. From that day in 1916, no one was allowed up the stairs into the Statue of Liberty's torch, because the explosion had made it structurally unsound. CIA historians and analysts believe that the Black Tom explosion helped lead to the rise of communism. You see, those 2 million pounds of munitions were headed to the Russian front - and it was shortages of materiel that led to Russia's leaving the war in 1916 and to the overthrow of the Czar. It's possible that if they'd had those munitions, they might have been able to turn the tide on the Eastern front.
Ultimately, the Black Tom incident also led to the internment of Japanese Americans in World War II; the attack instilled in us the fear that Japanese Americans would be as disloyal to America as some Germans had been in the first war. As he was discussing whether the internment should go forward with his Assistant Secretary of War, John J. McCloy, President Roosevelt said, "We don't want any more Black Toms."
It was the worst attack on American soil until 9/11, though the intent was not to kill people but to stop Americans' shipments of weapons and ammunition to the Allies. It was the event that wounded the Statue of Liberty almost mortally; it was one of the reasons she had to be rebuilt in the eighties. It was the event that led to the internment of Japanese Americans in World War II. And for 88 years, a circle of American flags has flown on the south end of Liberty Island - formerly Black Tom.

One last thing. Remember the reparations we demanded from the German government after the Great War? In fact, those negotiations were not settled until after World War II, in 1953. And the last restitution payments were finally paid to the victims' surviving kin and estates in 1979.
Arthur Woods, the police commissioner of New York, called for a version of Homeland Security all the way back in 1919.
We said we would never forget Black Tom, but we did. Over and over again.

15. Been Getting Warmer for a While

Lately there's been a lot of talk about global warming, and how it will change the world over the next hundred years. Moreover, according to reports, this change will be dramatic, and not for the better. It may alter our ability to live on the planet.

Hey great stuff, but the fact is, global warming has already taken place, and if it weren't for the fact that not that long ago our planet was much cooler than it is today, America might not have even been founded. And immigration from Europe certainly wouldn't have been as successful as it was.
How do we know this? Simple, out there in academia there's a group of individuals called historical climatologists. That is, historians who compare events in history to the world's known climate changes during the period being studied.

A good example of climate change in history is the Hanging Gardens of Babylon, one of the seven wonders of the ancient world. Of course today that area is one big desert, but at the time of the rise of civilization in the Tigris-Euphrates Valley, things were much different. It wasn't a desert at all. In fact it was quite lush and fertile.

Another point; anthropologists have wondered for years why mankind in the year 1,000 was almost identical to us in size and bulk. But, for the period of 1200 to 1700 mankind actually shrank in size, our past

few generations having now reversed those genetic patterns.
The answer lies in the fact that our world went through a period known as the Little Ice Age. And it lasted from 1200 to 1850 and may have been the primary reason why this country was discovered and settled.

We know this to be a fact by studying ice cores taken from the North and South Poles, along with examining tree rings for chemicals in the atmosphere and rainfall totals year by year. Additionally, during this same period a great deal was written on the subject of weather conditions that still exists to this day.
Combined we have a remarkably clear vision of the world's temperatures over the last 1,000 years, and it's a story you never hear.

A good example: In the year 1,000, we know that the mean average temperature in Europe during their summers was fully 3 degrees hotter than it is today. But that was a good thing. You see, that's how the Norsemen were able to navigate the North Atlantic and settle both Greenland and Iceland, just before the end of the First Millennium.

In fact, the planet was so warm that Leif Erickson sailed west to discover Vinland, or modern day Labrador in North America. Why? Because the North Atlantic wasn't near as cold, ice laden, or dangerous as it is in modern times. Moreover, the name Vinland is translated as Wine Land, named for the many varieties of grapes found there. Of course, grapes no longer grow in Labrador; it's just too cold.
During that same period, England negotiated a treaty with France over the sale of British wine. That's right. The planet was much warmer then than it is today, and British wine was considered better than French wine. It too is no longer made, because it's too cold for grapes to properly grow in England.
The 12th and 13th centuries gave us massive and beautiful architecture, such as the Notre Dame Cathedral in Paris. A celebration to God for all the bountiful harvests and the health of the planet and its people.
Then, without warning, the planet suddenly turned cold; the Little Ice Age had begun. Norsemen recorded that they had problems sailing from Iceland as early as 1203. A problem they had never had before.
In England, the Thames River started freezing each winter, and the shorter growing season led to massive famines. Edward the Second (whom you remember as Longshanks' gay son in Braveheart) levied taxes on livestock and forbade the making of ale from grain, as it was needed for bread. None of those measures worked. Even Edward had a hard time keeping bread in his palace, and he was King.
Throughout Europe there were many small farm owners, but with the continuously cold weather, they found they couldn't bring in enough of a harvest to feed their own families, much less pay taxes and keep their properties. It was during this period that many nobles took those farms as their own property for non-payment for taxes, forcing families to remain as tenant farmers or seek shelter in the larger cities.
Things became so bad that by the year 1300, the average life expectancy was down to 24 years, and that's if you survived childbirth.

The summers were short and wet, the winters brutally cold; and it would remain this way for the next 550 years.Glaciers expanded their range around the world, including in this country. When the Black Plague came to Europe it wiped out so many people mostly because they no longer lived on farms insulated from the disease. Now they were crowded into slums and therefore were more susceptible to infection.
By the 1500s, Britain was a country kept alive by the Atlantic Cod, which often replaced the produce that was always in short supply. (Cod being the perfect protein food.)

Now we know that cod are very sensitive to freezing waters; their kidneys won't function much below 37 degrees, but the fish thrive between that temperature and 50 degrees. At first British ships found cod near Greenland and along the same Labrador coast discovered by Leif Erickson. But by 1600 the fish no longer existed there. Too cold. Instead British sea captains now found the cod to the south, along what would one day be the New England Coast.

Cape Cod was given its name on May 15th, 1602, by Bartholomew Gosnold, the captain of the British ship Concord, during a fishing expedition. He named that hooked Massachusetts peninsula Cape Cod to let other British fishing ships easily find where the fish were schooling. He also sailed farther south and named an island where he was successful fishing after his wife, who had just given birth. That name also is with us today: Martha's Vineyard.

And it was because of those horrible situations in Europe due to cold weather that so many immi-

grants came to this country. It wasn't a pioneering spirit in most cases; it was just a chance to survive. Many early immigrants who couldn't afford to buy farms in Europe came here simply for the free land. At least they could attempt to grow something on it to feed their families.
In fact, that may have been a mistake also.

The Roanoke Colonists were last seen on August 22, 1587; today their fate is still a mystery. But it's no mystery to a climatologist: The 1580s were the driest period on the East Coast in almost 800 years. They just couldn't grow anything due to the drought.

Jamestown too was settled in this period of brutal cold and not much rain. Of the original 104 settlers, only 38 were alive a year later. Many descended to cannibalism in order to survive at all. It didn't get any better: From 1607 to 1625, another 6,000 individuals came to Jamestown, and 4,800 of them died.
New England had it better. Not that it was any less cold, but they had cod in their harbors and adopted from the Indians the techniques to survive the harsh elements.

In 1664 a Somerset clergyman, Richard Eburne, told his followers that the only chance they had of surviving the elements was to go to America. Over the next few years, 16,000 people from around Somerset County took his advice.

Does anyone remember Washington's winter at Valley Forge? Three months of non-stop snow and freezing temperatures? Again, the Little Ice Age in action.

1816 was known as the year without summer, both here and in Europe. It was caused by the interaction of the Little Ice Age with the volcanic eruption of Tambora in Java the year before. (Tambora's explosion was 100 times greater than the Mount St. Helens eruption, 21 years ago.) Harvard measured the temperatures for June of 1816 and found they averaged only 64 degrees.

The Erie Canal was built in 1817 because New York needed a reliable way to transport food. The decision was forced on them by the bad weather that had made roads impassable in 1816, or the year without summer.

And yes, the Irish potato famine in the 1840s was caused by, you guessed it, the Little Ice Age. Way too cold in the winter, too wet in the short summer growing season, and the potato plague quickly spread, ruining the entire potato crop. A million died, a half million came to America. And we welcome the Irish listening today.

Then in 1850, again without warning, the planet started warming up again. The Thames no longer froze over in the winter, and the London winter festival was canceled. Farmers in America could grow more food and feed more people, and for a short period they prospered.

By 1933 the Atlantic Ocean had warmed up enough that cod could once again be found off the coast of Greenland. And immigration from the British Isles declined dramatically. They no longer needed to come to America; they could survive in their own country.

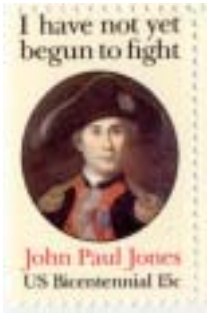
If you recall, the second wave of immigration came from the Baltics, Germany and Italy; they were escaping poverty and corrupt monarchs.

Today the temperature of the planet is 41/2 degrees warmer than at the height of the Little Ice Age; we are still 3 degrees colder than in the year 1,000. But if it hadn't been for that period of time when the planet was cold, the British wouldn't have found cod off of New England, which is why the Pilgrims and Puritans came here. The Irish wouldn't have come en masse, and Washington wouldn't have had that brutal winter at Valley Forge. But from 1850 the planet got a whole lot warmer, and America took off. People came here to escape the cold, and America prospered from global warming. Global warming from the 1850s on.

16. Have Cannon-Will Travel

If you go to the United States Naval Academy today, you'll find the grave of and a special shrine to the man most consider the father of the United States Navy. John Paul Jones, a tough and daring sailor.

But there are a few problems with his story. First, his name wasn't John Paul Jones. He was a man wanted for murder. And he left America shortly after our Revolution, never to return alive.



Of course you remember John Paul Jones as the commander of the Bonhomme Richard; you've heard his famous battle cry, "I have not yet begun to fight." That much is true; it's the rest of his life that's so amazing.

Let's start with his real name, John Paul; "Jones" he added later.

Born in Scotland to a gardener and his wife. Apprenticed off by his father to the merchant marine trade when he was only 13. A seven-year contract that paid young John Paul virtually nothing, while teaching him the basics of seamanship.

And so our future hero of the Revolution sailed between the West Indies and England, then back to the southern colonies, carrying sugar, rum or tobacco. John was quite clever. He read constantly and taught himself how to write.

His brother had already emigrated to America and had set up a tailor shop in Fredericksburg, Virginia. From him John Paul learned to dress well and to speak like a gentleman.

Fortunately for our young sailor, his ship's owner went bankrupt, so his seven-year apprenticeship contract was invalidated. And one thing the then 17-year-old knew was that he no longer wanted to be a deck mate on a boat. He wanted to become a captain. Who's gonna hire a 17-year-old kid for that?

John Paul did find work as a third mate, but it was on a 50-foot-long slave ship. John hated it and what he called "this abominable trade in humans." So he quit, but now he needed a ride back to England. Running into a fellow Scotsman, he was allowed passage on his boat; but on the way back to England, both the captain and first mate died of fever. Only John Paul knew navigation, and he safely brought the ship back home to its owners. They were so happy over not losing their ship that they made the 21-year-old John Paul its permanent captain.

Now, those who sailed with John Paul said he was an excellent captain, with one exception; his explosive temper if the crew didn't perform their duties well.

One sailor was whipped severely by John Paul for just such dereliction of duty and he complained about his treatment to the vice-admiralty. There was a trial, and John Paul was cleared, but the sailor died shortly thereafter; his family claimed he died of his beating. Jean Paul was hauled into court again for murder, and again cleared.

Then came the second charge of murder against him. On another trip, John Paul's boat was anchored in Tobago taking on cargo. His crew wanted an advance on their pay so they could go into town and get drunk. John Paul refused and they attempted to leave the ship; out came his sword and John Paul ran one of his crewmen through, killing him instantly.

Another trial was scheduled, only this time John Paul didn't like the odds. So he stole 50 pounds and deserted his ship, came to America and changed his name. To John Paul Jones.

Only he couldn't find a job. Why? Because even though he'd changed his name to escape prosecution, he had to lay low because many of the other ship captains knew him.

Then came our revolution, and John Paul Jones joined our navy. He was given small ships at first; he immediately sailed them back to England and attacked ships in their harbors. On one trip he managed to sink 16 fishing boats, then a bigger ship called the Ranger.

Now his base port was France; and, again, John Paul Jones knew no fear. The French loved his audacity so much, they gave him an even larger ship, which was named the Bonhomme Richard.

Problem was that boat was slow. And sure enough, in no time at all, the British Naval ship the Serapis caught up with Jones. Its greater speed, size and number of guns soon made mincemeat of Jones' boat.

So, John Paul Jones did the only thing he could; he rammed the Serapis, lashed his boat to it, and ordered his crew to carry the battle to the British on their ship. Some of his men began screaming for him to surrender; that's when Jones screamed back, "I have not yet begun to fight!"

Now, no one on a sinking ship had ever rammed the enemy, fought hand to hand and then taken the other ship, but John Paul Jones did. The Bonhomme Richard was sunk; Jones sailed the British Serapis into French ports. He was a true naval hero. Lionized. And we never hear of him again in American history.

Why? Glad you asked. First, because Jones was furious about the small percentage of the goods given him that he'd acquired at sea from our enemies. He felt the French and the Continental Congress weren't

paying him enough.

So he stayed in France for the next three years. He refused another American command. Additionally, the French women loved him and he loved them - virtually every night, according to those who knew him. In fact, Benjamin Franklin, then our ambassador to France, told the English-speaking Jones that the best way to learn a new language is to share a bed with a pretty teacher. Jones became very fluent in French.

He did sail back to a grateful nation; here, though he'd been promised a new ship, a money shortage kept it from being built.

So again, John Paul Jones couldn't find work.

One country came calling, Russia: Catherine the Great hired Jones as an admiral in her new navy. So off he went. However, that job didn't last long. First, the older Russian admirals didn't care for this young upstart from America. And then there were the rape charges brought against him by a young girl.

The charges weren't true. The girl's family had been paid by Russian admirals to bring the charges against him. Even so, after that even Catherine the Great distanced herself from him.

Now in ill health, John Paul Jones returned to France, the one place he was still a hero. Only he was destitute, and the French Revolution had done away with his many titled friends.

He died on July 18th, 1792, a pauper. Our ambassador in France demanded he be buried as cheaply as possible, then ordered his belongings to be auctioned to pay his debts.

So, how did John Paul Jones, buried in a pauper's grave in France, end up in a shrine at Annapolis?

The Spanish American War and the rewriting of our history in the 1890s. America needed heroes, and in 1906 our Ambassador to France, Horace Porter, went looking for John Paul Jones' grave.

Here's the strange part. It turns out that America had turned its back on Jones when he died in 1792, but the treasurer of the town where he'd lived knew that one day we'd recognize him as a hero of our Revolution. So, he personally paid for Jones funeral, buying an expensive lead coffin and filling it with alcohol to preserve Jones' body. That way, Jones could be recognized when we decided we wanted him returned.

We dug up quite a few graves before we finally found the perfectly preserved Jones. Theodore Roosevelt, on hearing the news that Jones' grave had been found, ordered the body brought home. On April 24th, 1906, John Paul Jones finally returned to America and was interred in his sarcophagus at the Naval Academy.

And that's why to this day midshipmen sing when they approach his grave: "Everybody works but John Paul Jones/He lies around all day/ body pickled in alcohol/ on a permanent jag they say."

Not bad for a man who had to change his name over a murder rap and ended his career as an admiral in the Russian Navy.

17. Oil in Twenty Eight Minutes

After Edwin Drake discovered in 1859 how to produce oil from a Pennsylvania well, it wasn't long before other oil prospectors jumped into the boom. The 42-gallon measure the world still uses came about when Drake decided to use whiskey barrels to collect and store his crude; and, by January of 1861, such barrels of oil were selling for $10 each. But new oil promoters just poured onto the scene, producing far more oil than America needed. AS our primary use was kerosene for lamps, prices quickly collapsed to a mere 10 cents per barrel.

Now, although he was just 26, John Rockefeller understood that the real profits in oil lay not in drilling and finding new sources, but in controlling the costs of transportation and the sales price. So, buying out his partners in a Cleveland refinery, Rockefeller waited until he had real financial liquidity, then cut a deal with the railroads to rebate the transport costs of his crude. And then he used his position to start undercutting his rivals', forcing them either to leave the business or sell out to him, by taking stock in his new Standard Oil. Within seven years Rockefeller controlled 10% of America's oil. His was the first oil cartel, and from there he simply bought up more pipelines and oil fields.

Finally, Rockefeller could control oil just enough to prevent the ongoing glut in the market from cratering prices. And, amazingly, even though there was always a surplus of oil, Rockefeller could still control

the price structure for crude well enough that within 25 years Standard Oil had netted one billion dollars in profits. So, by 1906 the Federal Government moved in to break up Rockefeller's near monopoly on the trade. In May of 1911 the Supreme Court did just that, splitting Standard Oil into 34 different companies to create competition. Mobil, Chevron, Exxon and Pennzoil are only a few of the companies broken out of Rockefeller's corporation.

However, by that late date, there was also a European movement into oil. It had started with Asian travelers, who told stories of the flaming fields near the Russian city of Baku; by 1871, derricks could be found everywhere in the region. Oil was plentiful enough that the Rothschilds, the French banking family, decided to commercialize that unsettled region and its oil. But they found the European market blocked by Standard Oil's yes, near monopoly of the market.

So instead the Rothschild syndicate decided to sell their new venture into Asia, where Standard Oil wasn't yet viable. To do so, the Rothschilds asked Marcus Samuel, a London import export merchant of handmade seashell novelties, to use his connections in the Far East to find a market for their oil. But, in order for the Rothschilds to blanket Asia quickly with their Russian oil - and to block any response from Standard Oil - Samuel came up with a very original way to ship oil.

To baffle detection by industrial spies, he commissioned a new type of ship; instead of holding barrels of oil, it had one large tank in the center of the boat. It was launched in 1892, named the Murex, a type of seashell. Additionally, by lobbying the British government persistently, Samuel won the first permission ever granted to transport kerosene through the Suez Canal. The success of the Rothschilds' new oil firm, which would be named Shell after Samuel's original import business, put an early lock on the Asian market.
But Marcus Samuel wasn't done just yet. He wound up lobbying for a decade to get the British Navy out of coal-burning battleships and into oil-powered ships. After all, he reasoned, using oil as fuel would allow England's navy to move farther, faster and with better acceleration, while using less fuel storage space than coal did. Samuel finally won over the First Lord of the Admiralty, Winston Churchill, in April of 1912.

Churchill's navy would come to depend on Mexico for oil; but, when that source proved unreliable, his distrust of the French Rothschilds led him to turn to his own British firm, Anglo Persian Oil, then doing business in Iran. You know it better today as British Petroleum. The next year, England purchased 51% of that firm to fully fund the nation's oil projects and guarantee its navy's oil.

Of course, then came the Great War, the first mechanized war, where oil was a vital resource. New battleships, new tanks, new armored cars and certainly the new war in the sky all demanded a ready oil supply. England's Anglo Persian Oil Company grew tenfold between 1912 and 1917, until the British began to worry about how much Iranian oil might be left. With that concern in mind, England fought and took Mesopotamia from the Ottoman Empire.

In spite of England's lock on Middle Eastern oil, America was by then producing 67% of the world's output and provided 80% of the Allies' need for oil during that war. Germany was in worse shape in terms of crude oil; its only chance was to capture the Romanian oil fields, which it failed to do. And so by fall of 1918, its army's supplies of gas cut off, Germany was forced to surrender. With 13 million dead from the conflict, England's Lord Curzon said, the Allied cause had "floated to victory on a wave of oil."

England and France quickly divided up the Middle East. England demanded Mesopotamia, promptly renamed Iraq, because Armenian oilman Calouste Gulbenkian had realized in 1914 that Iraq's oil reserves were likely stronger than Iran's. So Gulbenkian had formed the Turkish Petroleum Company, which was in fact a consortium of Anglo Persian, Shell, himself and the Deutsche Bank - the latter partner was forced out when Germany lost the war, and replaced by the companies we now know as Exxon, Mobil and five lesser American petroleum firms. For his part, Gulbenkian received 5% of all the oil shipped from the region. Iraq's King Faisal agreed to allow this group exclusive oil drilling rights until the year 2000.

Now renamed the Iraq Oil Company, Gulbenkian immediately started worrying about being cut out of future oil finds, so he brought the group together and drew a large red line on a map around an area of the Middle East where oil finds were likely. This would become known as the Red Line Agreement of the late twenties; and it would solidify the oil partners into one large group, now with the addition of France's largest

oil company. In time, this group of oil firms would become known as the Seven Sisters of oil.

So far so good; but then came the Second World War. It was launched by a Blitzkrieg because Hitler knew he didn't have enough gas for long protracted battles. Germany's lack of oil would weigh heavily on the German army forcing Hitler to invade Russia; with his primary motive to capture the Baku Oil Fields to secure the necessary oil to continue the conflict. Hitler told his generals, "Unless we get the Baku oil, our war is lost."

At the same time, Japan realized that its economic future was grim unless the nation controlled its own oil destiny. So the Japanese began a movement into French Indochina; France, busy fighting the war in Europe, couldn't defend the colony. Once Japan made that move, Franklin Roosevelt froze Japan's American bank accounts and cut Japan off from our oil. And it was that action, in July of 1941, that would lead to Pearl Harbor.

In fact, Japan's biggest mistake on December 7, 1942, was that the 4,500,000 barrels of oil stored at Pearl weren't targeted. Destroying them would have immobilized the remnants of our Pacific Fleet for some time.

Most Americans don't understand how much oil played to our benefit during that war. Japan never became oil independent. Every defensive move back toward their country saw their oil supplies dwindle, and our navy was sinking 100% of their oil tankers by late 1944. That's why the Japanese Navy was virtually stuck at home in the final months: their ships didn't have enough oil to even leave port.

But, as the war drew to an end, Roosevelt realized that the oil century, now in full growth, had achieved unstoppable momentum. So, meeting with Saudi King Ibn Saud, Roosevelt promised that the United States would forever protect Saud's kingdom if the king would make the US his partner in oil. After all, in 1939 Chevron and Texaco had struck oil in Saudi Arabia, and they had a 60-year concession on Saudi crude. This situation would lead to the formation of the Saudi American Oil Company, or Aramco.

Roosevelt also understood something else: that after the war, Russia would never be anyone's ally. By cutting a deal with the Saudi Royal Family for their protection, he was ensuring that the Middle East would not become part of the Communist Bloc. Ibn Saud feared only two things: takeover of his country by Russia, and the British - whom the Saudis profoundly mistrusted.

As a writer observed shortly thereafter, our official policy was that the Middle Eastern oil fields had to be preserved and protected west of the Iron Curtain, to assure the economic survival of the entire Western world.

Things started to fall apart when Socal, Chevron and Texaco realized that Saudi Arabia's oil wealth was so extreme, they couldn't handle the entire job alone. Calling for help, the Seven Oil Sisters were again in charge of the entire oil patch of the Middle East.

Then came the creation of Israel. The Saud family was completely against that, but their fear of a Russian takeover was greater; so the long, slow diplomatic dance between America and Saudi Arabia started. In a moment we'll find out how we went from being masters of the oil universe to fighting a never-ending war on terrorism today.

The change in our oil-fueled world started in 1948 in Venezuela. A new populist government, realizing that oil companies had for far too long taken most of the profits from the country's oil, demanded to be paid a fair share for its homegrown commodity. That's right: It was Venezuela that first demanded a 50/50 cut of the action.

Now, we weren't going to go to war against Venezuela over the profits on oil, and our oil companies knew that; so, realizing they would still make a healthy profit, the oil companies agreed to the deal. In 1949, Saudi Arabia, hearing of Venezuela's gutsy move, demanded the same cut, and it was given. Within a short period, Kuwait and Iraq also received 50/50 splits for their shares of the oil royalties. American oil companies realized that it was in their best interest to cut their partners in on the huge profits in oil; besides, these countries conceived a great deal of respect for America as a result of the fair play.

Leave it to the British to completely screw the world up. Iran, a practicing democracy at the time, demanded a 50/50 split on oil, just like their oil brethren were getting. British Petroleum refused. Iran threatened to nationalize its oil fields, although they offered a more than fair price for British Petroleum's share.

That started the panic internationally: if Iran nationalized its oil fields, Saudi Arabia, Kuwait, Venezuela, Iraq and others might do the same. So, our government told the British to quit jacking around and pay a fair percentage for the oil. Instead, Churchill convinced us that Iran was about to go Communist as a result.
Couldn't have that either, so our CIA overthrew Iran's democratic government and installed the Shah into power. So now, instead of fearing Russia's designs, the Middle Eastern countries began to fear a new era of colonialism under the U.S. After all, everyone in the Middle East knew it was America that had overthrown the Iranian government.

What they needed was a new Pan Arab Leader, and they found him in the form of Egypt's Gamal Nasser. Egypt didn't really have any oil of its own, but Nasser realized that oil was a pretty strong economic weapon to use against Western Influence. He in fact ignored pressure from Western countries and turned to the Soviets for his weapons and foreign aid.

Nasser then realized that if he took the Suez Canal, he might not control the oil, but he could control it getting to market. And he was no fan of Israel, either; so, in 1955 Nasser, about to make his move, found himself in a small war with England and France, with Israel joining them, over control of the Suez.
For the first time ever, the Arab oil countries reacted with an oil embargo - though not against us: Eisenhower refused to get involved because, legally, Egypt did own the Suez. But England and France were cut off from oil, and so they quickly folded; and with that little war, their influence in the Middle East was over.
Nasser, forever wanting to punish England for that event, helped orchestrate the military overthrow of Iraq's King Faisal, a British puppet. In time that coup would help bring the Baa'th party to power in Iraq; but in 1960, the new leaders in Iraq cut the Seven Oil Sisters out of 99% of their contracts, leaving them with only three small oil fields in that country.

But, by then, the Arabs now understood what they had. Oil was becoming their way of leveling the playing field, of getting the respect they craved.

That didn't matter to us, for a while. American oil production was so strong in that period that if supplies from other countries ran low, we just ramped up our production to cover the world's shortfall. Besides, by the sixties, the Russians got serious about their oil supplies and found an international market ready to trade hard currency for black gold.

Yet, once again, too many producers created a glut of oil on the world market. So in 1959, the British (again) decided to cut the posted price of oil by 10%, without asking anyone. That in turn cut the oil-producing nations out of a great deal of money that they'd been counting on. In 1960, with still too much oil on the market, Standard of New Jersey, now Exxon, also dropped the price of oil - and that was the end gate and set in motion the modern world of oil we know today.

Abdullah Tariki, the Saudi oil minister, called on Juan Pablo Alfonso of Venezuela. Tariki wanted suggestions on how to deal with the problems of having oil companies determine the price of oil, instead of the oil-producing countries. A month later, representatives of Saudi Arabia and Venezuela, plus Kuwait, Iran and Iraq met and OPEC was formed. Now, the producing nations had their own cartel, and they would set the price of oil.

The oil companies quickly realized that they had screwed up royally. But again, it didn't matter much; America was still the world's strongest oil producer. And so the sixties went by with little impact from OPEC; but then we hit peak production in 1970. Suddenly, we realized, we were vulnerable; we could no longer simply turn on the oil spigots and make up for shortfalls - we were quickly becoming oil dependent on others. At that moment, our government fully understood that this would be a problem.

And at that same moment, OPEC got a real handle on its newfound power. It quickly showed up in the move by the new Libyan strongman, Col. Muammar Qadhafi, who threatened to nationalize his country's oil fields if he didn't receive better than a 50/50 split on revenues in 1971. Well, we agreed; so, a month or so later, Qadhafi asked for more. He got that, too. Now, because American oil production had peaked and OPEC was feeling and flexing its muscles, the price of oil had doubled from 1970 to 1973. At that point, Saudi Oil Minister Sheik Ahmed Yamani defiantly proclaimed, "We are now masters of our own commodity."

In October of 1973, OPEC formally announced that it would now set the price of oil and do so without consulting its oil company partners.

Just in time for the Yom Kippur War, between Israel, Syria and Egypt - only this time, unlike the Six-Day War of 1967, Israel needed our help badly. We flew in supplies and quickly authorized a $2.2 billion aid package. OPEC, furious over this, first upped oil to $5.11 a barrel, then cut off all oil exports to any country that had backed Israel.

Now, today, it's easy to be mad at OPEC, while others are not happy with Israel; but the truth is that Russia had covertly started that war by playing both sides against each other, knowing what the outcome would be. And for the first time ever, American oil fields couldn't make up the shortfall of oil due to the embargo. Oil was soon $16 a barrel.

Richard Nixon drew up plans for an invasion of Saudi Arabia to seize their oilfields, plus Kuwait's and Oman's.

But, it was over for the Seven Oil Sisters in most of the Middle East. The final straw was when revolutionaries in Iran overthrew the Shah in 1979, taking Iran's oil exports off the world market; and this time, Saudi Arabia, not us, came to the world's rescue. Panic still overtook the market; and things didn't get any better when Saddam Hussein went to war with Iran in 1980, screwing up the world's oil market yet again.

But now there was yet another problem: Russia had invaded Afghanistan. The Carter Administration felt this was the Soviet's first move toward taking over part of the Persian Gulf - and with it, a cut of the world's oil supplies.

The Carter Doctrine called for us to defend, at any cost, the Persian Gulf region; it created the Rapid Deployment Joint Task Force, now known as US Central Command. Notice the Carter Doctrine didn't say a word about Afghanistan, but it put the groundwork in place for protecting the Middle East.

Still, the best protection was to keep Russia so tied up in Afghanistan that they couldn't move anywhere else. So a Presidential Directive, signed by Jimmy Carter and later affirmed by Ronald Reagan, created a local army of resistance to the Soviets, funded with $15 million in 1983, which the Saudi Royal family matched. Why? Because they believed the Russians could have secret plans to take over their country. In time, we kicked in a quarter of a billion, and the Saudis matched it. Actually, they went one better; they started sending a large number of Islamic fighters to Afghanistan to stop the Russian advance. One of these fighters was a young Osama Bin Laden.

We also got into bed with Saddam Hussein. After all, he was an Arab strongman who did believe in a secular government and in fighting our real enemy, Iran - which, at the time, was run by those extremist religious leaders. At the time, we believed that, if successful, Hussein's brand of secular government would spread throughout the Middle East and stop the outbreak of Sharia law.

All of this in the name of stopping Russia, the evil empire, from taking over a large part of the world's oil-producing nations.

We won. The Soviet Union fell because, realistically, its economy had been bankrupted by the cost of the Afghani war.

But the blowback might have been worse. Because this was also the period when Islamic jihadists realized their power, which they believed had caused Russia to lose the war and, therefore, lose their empire. Hussein, because we had backed him against Iran, thought it was open season on any neighbor, with our blessing. That ended when he went into Kuwait. And, because the Saudis were deathly afraid of the Russians and then Hussein, they allowed us to stage operations from bases in Saudi Arabia. This infuriated the Islamic fighters, now without a war to fight because the Russians had gone home from Afghanistan.

As a result, there was only one World Empire left, and that was us. But, for most of the nineties, the price of oil fell.

And, while we put Iraq on a UN oil-for-food program during that period, one major side effect was that this also effectively removed Iraq from OPEC, or at least removed Saddam Hussein's input. And yes, the price of oil fell as a result.

Then Hussein made his biggest mistake. For about the time of 9/11, seeing what he perceived was our weakness, the damned fool started trading his oil in the new Euro, instead of using the American dollar. And

that alone, if other nations did the same thing, could have done serious damage to our economy, if nothing else, because of the psychological damage of having another currency be brand as the most secure in the world - a real problem as our dollar was already weakening against foreign currencies.

Of course, the last chapter isn't written yet; the outcome of these events is far from certain. But to this point you've gotten the entire history of oil in less than 30 minutes. It all started with putting oil in whiskey barrels in 1859, and we still price oil by the American whiskey barrel today. No wonder we're drunk on the stuff.

18. We'll Get Together for a Cross Burning

It was Friday, April 1, 1921. Although the day had started out as just another fine spring day in Dallas, Texas, an anonymous phone call to a reporter for the Dallas Times Herald was about to change everything. The reporter was told that if he really wanted a great story, that evening he was to stand on the corner of Main and Ervay and wait for further instructions. The reporter ran down to the street and shortly thereafter was put into the back of a car, where he was blindfolded and driven along with five other cars to Hutchins Road, six miles south of downtown. There he was let out, surrounded by men wearing handkerchiefs; and from the back of another car, Alex Johnson, a young African-American who worked as an elevator operator at the Adolphus Hotel, was yanked out, a noose around his neck, already pleading for his life.

The masked group had kidnapped him from his home on Roseland Street for this demonstration of mob power. His shirt was ripped off him as one man said, "Nigger, you have confessed to the crime, but we have decided not to hang you." A gun was pushed into his side as the man continued, "If you cry out, you'll be shot." Instead of being hanged, Johnson was lashed 25 times with a bullwhip. And then another member of the mob walked up with a small paintbrush and a bottle of acid and burned the letters KKK on his forehead. Johnson would forever be marked, the first victim of the Ku Klux Klan's coming to Dallas in 1921.

The story made the Times Herald the next day, quoting Sheriff Dan Harston as commenting, "As I understand the case, the Negro was guilty of doing something he had no right to do. There will be no investigation by my department." Criminal District Court Judge Robert Seay said, "Maybe it will be a lesson." Judge Work commented, "If enough people hear of this, it may do some good." Johnson's alleged crime? A liaison with a white woman.

The Ku Klux Klan had its revival in 1915 in Atlanta, inspired by the racist movie, Birth of a Nation. William J. Simmons believed that his new, updated version of the Klan could be the national voice for morality. In fact, the Dallas Klan had been organized just a few months before the Johnson whipping; but within two years, the Klan would come to control virtually all of Dallas. Its appeal was simple - patriotism, or their version of it, morality, Native Americans for white Americans, and fundamentalist Christianity.

Bertram G. Christie formed Dallas Klan No. 66 in late 1920; and within four years it was said to be the biggest group in the nation. Those whom the Klan wanted to indoctrinate into their order would be met at church or their workplace; they would be handed a copy of the Ten Commandments and the American Constitution and invited to a private dinner, where they would be indoctrinated into the Klan's mission. It's a good bet that few members read the Commandments or the Constitution they were given, for one commandment is Thou Shall Not Kill; and the Constitution doesn't suggest that mobs take the law into their own hands.

We now know that many Dallas leaders were involved in this group: Louis Turley, our police commissioner, Elmo Straight, chief of police, 91 other officers (about 60% of the police force), 12

attorneys, eight doctors, Dallas Power and Light officials, the Democratic party chairman, our tax collector and the head of the local Ford factory. One list created in 1922 even suggests that R.L. Thornton was one of the Klan.

Henry Wade, who would one day be Dallas' District Attorney, remembered the night when the Klan came to his home to suggest that his father, a Rockwall attorney, join up. Wade's dad told the Klansmen that he had no intention of joining, and then said he viewed the Klan as a threat to decent society and law and order. The Klansmen suggested that one night they would come to his house again, to tar and feather him. Wade simply replied, "You'd better be ready to kill me; I'll have my shotgun ready." Henry Wade would remember that night when his father stood up to the Klan forever.

Six weeks or so after Alex Johnson's flogging the Klan held their coming-out party, on a Saturday night in downtown Dallas. Marching out of the old Majestic Theater in single file came all 780 of them, dressed in their robes, bearing the American flag and a burning cross. Many carried torches; every 20th marcher carried a sign, some of which read, "We Stand for White Supremacy," "All Pure White," "Pure Womanhood," "Parasites Go." As they began their walk the city's lights went off, just to dramatize the event. It was covered in the local papers; and the next day, a Sunday, preachers around town started singing the praises of the Klan and its motives. Dr. T.O. Perrin told his congregation, "The hand of God may be working through the Ku Klux Klan, to make the country better socially and economically." Others were just as positive in their remarks. But things were about to slide out of control. Philip Fox resigned as the managing editor of the Dallas Times Herald to become the head of public relations for the Klan at their national headquarters in Atlanta. But, like any other group, the Klan endured power plays for control; Fox wound up shooting an attorney from a rival Klan. During the murder trial that followed, Dallas Mayor Louis Blaylock testified to Fox's character, as did Congressman Hatton Sumners and many journalists from this area.

The Dallas Morning News had a different opinion of the rise of the Klan in North Texas. In an editorial written by Alonzo Wasson about their coming-out party in downtown Dallas, the News said, "Those who marched through the streets were the exemplars of lawlessness, their actions were a fit subject for a grand jury." The piece was titled, "Dallas slandered."

George Dealey, president of the Morning News, walked down to Wasson's office saying he had enjoyed the editorial, but added, "I believe it would be better to hold a conference when breaking new ground on editorial policy." Didn't matter. George Dealey and the Dallas Morning News were about to launch their crusade against the Klan, one that almost destroyed the newspaper.

The very night the Dallas Morning News published that editorial, John Moore, who happened to be white and was a dispatcher at the Union Terminal, was being released by Sheriff Harston into the hands of the Klan. His alleged crime: assault on a 12-year-old girl. Like Alex Johnson, Moore was taken to a remote location, this time the Trinity River Bottoms west of town, and whipped; as with the first flogging, a reporter from the Times Herald was there as a witness. Moore was dumped at Akard and Main, another object lesson on morality for all to witness. Again, no one in law enforcement thought anything wrong with this action. Mayor Blaylock told the media, "I believe

Moore got what he justly deserved."

And so the whippings continued, often with the person being tarred and feathered afterward. Then in late 1921, the New York World started running a series of 21 articles, showing the real nature of the Klan nationally, the floggings, terrorist actions against minorities, the lynchings of many people who actually had been innocent of any crime, but were killed just on the suspicion they might be guilty. Again, the Dallas Morning News reran all 21 anti-Klan articles from the World.

And all that happened was that the membership rolls of the Klans, both in Dallas and nationwide, grew substantially. One south Dallas preacher responded to the News and its articles, saying he had investigated the Klan, observed their tactics and wholeheartedly approved of their methods. Reverend R.H. Tharp, pastor of a local Baptist church, told his flock that the Klan's whipping post methods were "the only appropriate tactics" to use on those who were "intent on ruining our womanhood."

It is estimated that upwards of 13,000 of our citizens had by then joined the Klan. But in spite of that, many in Dallas realized that the Klan was damaging the image of our city and its dynamic growth and fostering hate - not to mention that the Klan was denying many people the right to their day in court. Yet, at first, no one had the courage to stand up to this group. If you said anything against the Klan's activities, you were branded as someone who opposed America and opposed the Bible - and you were someone who must believe in the rights of the immoral.

Next week: A Klansman gets away with murder. The Klan takes over virtually every elected post in government, leading citizens try to stop them and end their reign of terror. The Dallas Morning News is targeted for extinction, and the State Fair of Texas has the largest attendance ever when it starts inducting people into the Ku Klux Klan. Then, just as suddenly as the Klan came to power, it's over. We'll see why, in the end, America turned away from the so-called morality of the Ku Klux Klan.

The Ku Klux Klan had come to Dallas in late 1920, whipped their first victim, Alex Johnson, in April of 1921, and burned their initials on his forehead with acid so no one would forget. Within a couple of years their membership rolls had swollen to 13,000. Each new member was handed the Ten Commandments and the Constitution - which, apparently, none of them ever read - as the Klan's guiding principles.

The Dallas Morning News had come out against the Klan. But the Times Herald's manager - just in case the Klan turned on them, hurting their advertising revenues - decided to take a more journalistic view of things.

And no individual in Dallas could come out against the Klan, for anyone who attempted to do so was publicly denounced as anti-American, anti-religious, anti-motherhood and immoral. That's if they weren't kidnapped, whipped, tarred and feathered.

But then came an incident after which the average citizen could remain silent no longer. In the spring of 1922, an African American was leaving the home and business of Phillip Rothblum, an Austrian who had lived in Dallas for over a decade, a picture framer by profession. J.J. Crawford, a 24-year-old Dallas Police office and member of the Klan, attempted to shoot the "suspect," but missed, killing his partner, Leroy Wood. Rothblum had witnessed the event; one month later, two men came to his door, saying they were police and asking him to come downtown. Not believing their story, he resisted; the struggle was so great that two of his teeth were knocked out. He was blindfolded, driven out of town and whipped, but during that beating his blindfold slipped - and he recognized one of his assailants as Dallas Police Officer J. J. Crawford. Rothblum was told he had to leave Dallas by 6:00 the next day; he was so frightened that he sold his business and moved within

the time allotted.

But, before he left, the Times Herald interviewed him, noted the savage beating he had taken and then questioned the Dallas police, who claimed that it must have been neighbors, who objected to his immoral conduct. Two weeks later the Klan abducted Frank Etheredge, who ran a local lumberyard, took him to Hutchins, lectured him on his morality and whipped him.

District Attorney Maury Hughes, a Klansman himself, broke ranks and decided to try Officer Crawford for the shooting incident in front of Rothblum's home; they found Rothblum in St. Louis, and he returned for the trial. On the stand, Rothblum stated flatly that he knew Crawford well, and not just from the night he'd shot his partner dead; Rothblum had once sold him a picture that Crawford had never paid for, in spite of numerous attempts to collect.

The defense simply painted Rothblum as a man who paid Negroes and Mexicans to sleep with his wife, a man of low moral character. On the first ballot, the jury acquitted Crawford of the crime.

That was enough. Four hundred influential Dallas residents, led by former judge C.M. Smith Deal, came out against the Klan and told how they had infiltrated the Sheriff's and Police Departments. They allowed their names to be published in the papers, and the mayor was forced to demand that all city employees resign from the Klan immediately. Governor Pat Neff sent a telegram suggesting that the Texas Rangers move into Dallas and clean up this mess, writing, "For some reason, your law-abiding people have been forced to bend their knees to the lawless element in your city." At an anti-Klan rally held in April at City Hall, 5,000 people attended, but the Klan's own newspaper, Texas 100 Percent American, called the meeting a bust. This citizen action group took to speaking across North Texas against the Klan, though Richardson and Lancaster told them not to bother coming to their towns. But the Klan paper was right: In spite of 5,000 showing up to an anti-Klan rally, 100 citizens were said to be joining the Klan daily. Four days after the Dallas County Citizens League was formed, 2,300 new Klansman were accepted; and that summer another 3,500 joined in a ceremony at Fair Park.

In the 1922 Democratic primary, the Klan's candidates won every race and took control of the courthouse. With that, the Citizens League wilted away.

The Dallas Morning News continued to write about the Klan's crimes. The Klan in turn branded them a Catholic-owned paper. And in that action they betrayed the real truth: Yes, the Dallas Klan didn't just target blacks, they were after anyone they judged to be less moral, at least according to their version of morality. But more than anything else, they hated the Catholic Church.

And, because the Dallas Morning News had the guts to write the truth, it became the Klan's newest target. Letters flooded the paper demanding to know how many Catholics worked there; the Klan boycotted the paper's advertisers; businesses owned by the Klan canceled their ads. Klan members canceled their subscriptions and threatened those who distributed the paper. The Morning News's cash on hand went from $200,000 to nothing, yet George Dealey wouldn't budge: "Our conscience will not permit us to change front, even if 50% of our readers quit." The daughter of the late Col. A.H. Belo came to town for conferences on the problems, but the paper stood firm.

Then came the municipal elections of 1923, another landside for all the Klan-endorsed candidates. Now they controlled virtually everything. The kidnappings, beating and threats continued.

But it would be unfair to discuss the Klan without mentioning their finest moment: They raised $80,000 for the Hope Cottage, a home for abandoned children. In fact, it was often the charitable actions that the Klan members performed nationwide that gave them at least a degree of respectability; after all, they always denied their darker side.

Then came the State Fair's Ku Klux Klan day, which saw record-setting attendance. The

rodeo performers wore their hoods and gowns; there was a football game between the Fort Worth and Dallas Klans and a speech on the Menace of Immigration. There were 25,000 people that weekend watching 5,600 men swear allegiance to the Cause.

And so it would seem that the self-anointed morality police, operating outside the law, torturing some people and lynching others, were at their peak. Decent people feared them. Anyone who suggested that they were the least likely to show the best side of what America stood for was targeted. The Klan's illegal activities were rarely investigated, and businessmen who didn't believe in the Klan's position saw their businesses targeted. For three decades Dallas had been a city on the go, our civic leaders carefully planning their expansive vision of what Dallas could be; yet now, some of the city's civic leaders were found to be Klansmen. Others, such as Stanley Marcus' father, Ben Cabell, Alex Sanger, Leon Harris, George Dealey and Glenn Pricer, would stand up to them.
Three years of a massive wave of enrollment, three years of torturing those they disapproved of - and suddenly, it was over.

There were many reasons. First, the Klan tried to get Felix Robertson elected governor and failed. The national media continued to write about the Klan's wave of terror; and the many decent citizen members, who had joined the Klan because they honestly did believe in morality and Americanism, started to realize that they didn't believe it as much when the Klan had no regard for the law. The more respected business leaders quit first; they understood that the Klan was destroying the growth of the city - just as, in the sixties, our most famous outspoken conservatives were told to shut up after Kennedy's assassination, because it was hurting Dallas's image nationally. And so this story finally ended in 1925, when the head of the Klan in Indiana was convicted of abducting, drugging and raping his secretary, who committed suicide. The image of the Klan as moral leaders of the nation was blown apart.

Within the year the Dallas Klan, once thought to have had 13,000 members, watched membership rolls drop to 1,200. Meetings which had once hosted 3,500 Klansmen had to beg to get 150 to show up. They kept their office near Fair Park until 1929; with the death of the Klan and a restoration of real law and order, Dallas started growing again.

But, had it not been for George Dealey and the Dallas Morning News refusing to buckle under, who knows which direction Dallas might have taken?

19. Deja Vu, All Over Again

Over the past few years we have all engaged in the great debate about overthrowing Iraq's leader/despot/dictator - whichever term you prefer. It should be remembered that a hundred years ago that was the same battle cry in our war with Spain - however, have might you noticed that Cuba still isn't free today?
But, remember, that's what we claimed we set out to do.

It's obvious that Fidel Castro is a one-man show, and obvious that things aren't likely to change. So doesn't it seem strange that, in spite of all the problems between our two countries, we still maintain a large naval base at Guantanamo?

And each and every year our Treasury Department sends Castro a check for the rent.
And this all started with Charles Darwin.

That's right. Darwinism, or Social Darwinism, as it relates to the evolutions of national identities, was becoming extremely popular among those studying political science in our universities in the 1880s. Of course, it was a bit racist to conclude that Anglo-Saxon Americans were the highest form in the evolution of mankind, but that's what was taught. In fact, at Johns Hopkins University, Professor Herbert Baxter Adams taught his students that it was actually a Teutonic Germ - which had spread out of Germany into England and then been brought to the American colonies - that made our intellect so extraordinary. It made us the only members of

the human race capable of self-government. Evolution through pure blood, he said, was what put this country at the top of the international evolutionary chain. And therefore only the White Anglo-Saxon Americans were capable of ruling the world.

Now, before you think Professor Adams had no effect on the country, keep in mind that two of his students were Woodrow Wilson and Thomas Dixon. One became president, and the other wrote the founding document of the KKK, The Klansman.

Adams' theories caught on quickly, and within a decade of the graduation of students Adams had taught this new concept of evolution, those Jim Crow laws started showing up. Those laws might have happened anyhow, but now there was "scientific justification" for them.

We fought the Spanish American War under the guise of liberating the people of Cuba, Puerto Rico, Guam and the Philippines from Spain. But the people we sent to those places, first to fight the wars and then to administrate their governments, were often little more than Anglo-Saxon supremacists, utterly contemptuous of those they governed.

Again, remember this nation's movements toward Jim Crow laws in the 1890s, and then transfer that racist mindset to our recently conquered colonies.

Now, most know that today the Philippines was once an American colony; and we know that Puerto Rico and Guam are still in the American sphere. But few people realize that we once intended to annex Cuba and make it one of the states in our Union.

That's right. We didn't throw out the Spanish and give Cubans their freedom; we stayed and tried to Americanize them.

There was, of course, a problem with all of this: The Teller Amendment, which had passed Congress with a flat statement that we had no imperialistic designs toward our Caribbean neighbor. That was out the window quickly.

Now the war with Spain only lasted 113 days; by 1898 the Spanish, all but bankrupt as a nation, were only nominally in charge of anything. Once the fighting was over, we installed General Leonard Wood as the military governor of Cuba.

Wood, although he had a medical degree from Harvard and had been on the last campaign to capture Geronimo, was something of a white supremacist. And sure enough, in Cuba he carried out road and school construction, raised the sanitation levels and helped eradicate disease on the island - the civilized things that we always do. But strong American business interests had already established operations in Cuba, and Wood's civil improvements helped those U.S. companies as much as they improved the lives of some Cubans.

Wood and some of his commanders had a unique view of their occupation. General Samuel Young wrote, "A lot of degenerates, they are no more capable of self-government than the savages of Africa." General Wood wrote to President McKinley shortly thereafter that tensions between his people and Cubans seeking independence were on the rise. McKinley wired back, "Finish your job and get out of there as quickly as possible." Wood, who stayed for nearly three years, later wrote of his ongoing problems, "We're dealing with a race that has steadily been going downhill for a hundred years."

So, a program was put in place to get educated Cubans with ties to American business elected, thereby ensuring that the country would be tied both financially and politically to the United States.

In June of 1900 came the elections. And, just to make sure that his chosen candidates won, General Wood campaigned constantly for his people and tried restricting the vote - something that was catching on in our own Southern States. Didn't work: The votes overwhelmingly went to those Cubans promoting independence, and the pro-U.S. party won few seats. Then that November came elections for a convention to draft a new Cuban Constitution. Again, the pro-independence Cuban nationalists easily won.

Well, we weren't going to get anywhere this way. So Secretary of State Elihu Root, another Social Darwinist, managed to push through Congress the Platt Amendment, forcing financial and political ties between the two countries. Under this Amendment, America would buy sugar and fruit from American companies in Cuba, and Cubans would be forced to buy American goods. America also reserved the right to have veto power over any treaty Cuba signed with another nation. The Platt Amendment also forced Cuba to lease us space for a military base, which is how Guantanamo Bay came about.

Well, we probably would have forced the point more harshly and won out in the end. But, with a war going on in the Philippines and the American public debating whether we should be an international empire or not, the tide slowly started turning toward not fighting a war on two fronts.

After two and a half years, General Leonard Wood came home. He wrote President McKinley that "There is of course little or no independence left in Cuba under the Platt Amendment," and then predicted that annexation would shortly follow.

That didn't happen. But the point is that most Americans have no clue that we stayed in Cuba after the war with Spain, or that we wanted to annex the country and possibly make it a state. We have never heard that we passed a law forcing Cuba to do business only with us, nor have we been taught that they couldn't sign any treaty that we couldn't veto.

As Juan Gomez said at their Constitutional Convention, "We are asked to give the United States a key to our house, with the right to come in whenever they choose."

Well, yeah!

President Teddy Roosevelt didn't care for the way Cuban independence was going in 1906, so he sent in our troops back in again; they stayed for three more years that time. Wilson sent troops back into Cuba in 1916.

But the business relationship stayed intact. That is, until 1933, when Cuban president Juan San Martìn, a nationalist, had the audacity to declare the Platt Amendment null and void.

Additionally, San Martìn hinted that he might nationalize American interests there. So we helped a right-wing army sergeant, by the name of Fulgencio Batista, overthrow the popularly elected president and install himself as dictator of Cuba. American interests with Cuba would be maintained for the next 26 years.

You know the next part of the story: Castro comes out of the mountains on January 1st, 1959, Batista flees, and the Mafia loses its Cuban casinos.

Here's the part that you don't know: In his first speech, Castro proclaimed: "The North Americans came and made themselves masters of our country. But this time the revolution will not be thwarted, and the republic will really be free." Castro was referring to the Platt Amendment and our suppression of free elections. Of course, he didn't bother to have those free elections, either.

The point of the story is that we didn't free the people of Cuba, nor did we have any real intent to do so. When negotiations long after the war could have moderated our relationship, hard-liners kept that from happening. In the end, Castro was the direct result of those failed negotiations. And he knew it; that and that alone is how he's kept power for the last 44 years.

As for the Platt Amendment? Well, Castro actually wanted to keep most of its parts in place - certainly the part about Cuba's having the United States as primary trading partner. We refused. But we kept the last part of that amendment, Article VII, the right to maintain a military base on the island - Guantanamo. When Teddy Roosevelt first set the annual lease rate for the base, it was 30 coins of gold each year. Today, we send Cuba a check for just over $4,000 for the rent on the base, and each year Castro tears that check up. Hasn't cashed one yet.

As for Social Darwinism, the concept that in our pure Anglo-Saxon blood flows the Teutonic Germ that makes us the strongest link in the human evolutionary chain? I just wonder how badly that old myth affected at least

some of our negotiations with other countries - because we had no respect for the so-called lower species of humans? Maybe, maybe not.
But one thing is for sure: If certain white supremacists hadn't been in charge of things 105 years ago, odds are excellent that Cuba would have become our 51st state.

20. 1915-That Was The Year That Was

If you had to pick one year out of the last century, the one year that changed America forever, what year would you pick?

Tough, isn't it? You see, most of us tend to think in terms of a single event and the year it happened. Was it the fall of the Berlin Wall in 1989 that changed things the most? Or the assassination of John Kennedy in 1963? Maybe you think 2001's terrorist attacks changed us more than anything else.

The possibilities are endless, but I believe I can give you the single most important year, the one in which America changed forever: 1915.
Let me give you a list of things that happened that year, events of strategic importance to modern society, and we'll see if you can top them.

First, the national debate on whether or not to join in the Great War, which had begun in Europe the year before, started in earnest here in 1915.

And agreements were finally reached in 1915 between industry, labor movements and government on how to end child labor in this country forever. Legislation would be passed early the next year.
1915 brought us Emily Post's first book on etiquette, a huge best seller. It was important, not because it taught us which fork to use with our salads, but because with the publication of that book and subsequent efforts by Ms. Post, Americans' collective personal priority changed. From the belief that what was important was individual character, which was all that had been taught before The Blue Book, we converted to believing that a pleasing personality and correct manners were more important.

D. W. Griffith's Birth of a Nation appeared, the first of the modern movies. This film didn't just create modern Hollywood; because of its depiction of blacks, William J. Simmons founded the modern Ku Klux Klan in Atlanta, Georgia, on November 15th, 1915. 1915 was also the year that Woodrow Wilson resegregated the government, forcing the removal of African Americans from jobs they'd held since Reconstruction. Today we still deal with the issues of race laid down in 1915.

It was the year that 1/8th of the American workforce finally won a 48-hour workweek. For the first time ever, workers were on the way to better working conditions.

Ford's moving assembly line had been invented a few years earlier and the $5 day for workers had happened the year before; but it was in 1915 that the combination of the assembly line and light turnover of workers, due to higher wages, made its mark. Ford had a record year and proved you could pay your workers well and still make a fortune.

Oh, and time clocks were introduced in 1915, with the guarantee that a punctual worker would be a better employee.

Mary Pattison published her groundbreaking book, Principles of Domestic Engineering, the Business of Home Management. Kid you not, it was a best seller. Creating the stereotype of the American housewife, which men still love and women hate, it was based on — surprise — Henry Ford's moving assembly line. And Pattison's book came out just in time, for it was in 1915 that the inexpensive electric motor was introduced. And it made possible vacuum cleaners and all sorts of other time-saving appliances for the home and office. Advertising changed in 1915. No longer were ads simple statements of what a product did. Now, ads' content began trying to make you believe that you weren't a fully developed and secure individual unless you had the latest and greatest whatever. That type of ad worked; in 1914 just $684 million had spent on advertising, but by 1919 the figure was $1.4 billion. We still use ads targeting insecurity about one's self-worth today.

Yes, I believe that 1915 was the pivotal year for the things required to create modern America. The debate on whether or not to enter the Great War in Europe started the nation wondering how much of a world superpower America should become. Hollywood was forever established with the first blockbuster film, Birth

of a Nation. Emily Post changed us from being a country that cared most about character into being a country where we were more focused on one's personality, as expressed by manners. Child labor was finally out, and other workers had their workweek reduced to humane hours.

Wilson took blacks out of government and the KKK re-formed, and today the legacy of those events is reflected in how America's races often distrust one another.

The moving assembly line and strong individual wages meant we were now a consumer-driven society.

And the advent of small, inexpensive electric motors changed housework forever.

Yet, in spite of its being the most pivotal year in American history, defining us for the next 100 years, the truth is that I would have hated to have come of age in 1915.

Why? Because in spite of all these incredible changes in our society, I would have started my business career right before the worst 34-year period in American history. That's right, the absolute worst and most insecure 34 years in the history of the United States.

Let's assume you were born in 1894 and you turned 21 in 1915, with all these glorious changes in American life and society happening around you. Here's what you had to look forward to before you retired:

A world war, a serious and major recession from 1920 through 1922, collapse of the stock market, the Great Depression, another world war, which resulted in materials shortages that slowed our economy until 1949.

The Korean conflict.

And suddenly, just as you reached retirement age, things started getting better.

In fact, when you look at this period in American history, a period we think fondly of today, only during the period of 1923 to 1929 did we experience anything close to good times. And, for many Americans, even the 1920s gave them nothing in the way of prosperity.

Farm income collapsed; and farmers, once considered the backbone of America, went from being respected to being called hicks or hayseeds. The Communist scares were on, brought about by the Anarchist Bombings of 1919. Unemployment for adult males averaged 10% or more during the 1920s. And half of all males and two-thirds of the women said they'd been without work for two months or more during at least one period in that decade. Real income and its purchasing power stopped growing in 1926. But, even if you were gainfully employed and never out of a job, try to find a place to go out and party — legally. You probably forgot about Prohibition.

In fact, poverty wasn't being erased as quickly as it should have been, considering all the things we had going for us in 1915. Here are the stats at the outbreak of the Second World War:

33% of all Americans still didn't have running water,
67% had no central heat,
half didn't own indoor baths or refrigerators, and
33% still cooked with wood.

Oh, and electricity only reached our most rural population in the '40s.

Then came the fifties, and all those things that had begun in 1915 really started paying off. And the one negative from 1915, racial problems, was re-addressed in the mid-fifties; it's been a long, bumpy road to correcting those problems.

Developing one's personality to be more pleasingly mannered; decent pay for labor; perfecting manufacturing for consumers; America as a world superpower and what that responsibility means; small electrical appliances to make our lives better; modern advertising; and Hollywood as we know it, all these things came

about in one year, 1915.

It's a shame that those who came of age that year missed all the benefits, for wars, recessions, depressions and prohibition are all they knew.

It took two generations of Americans to finally understand and perfect what was put in place in 1915; we are the generations that have benefited most from that year. If you can name another year in American history that did more to create our modern society, I'd love to hear your reasoning. I believe 1915 was modern America's pivotal year.

21. Westward Commies-Dallas Style

It's hard to believe, but once there was a great communist invasion of Texas. It lasted only ten years, yet one can still see cities and parks created by, or named after, those European commies. However, few know that many of those early communists also helped Dallas become a commercial and cultural center.

It had all started around 1830, with the French philosopher Charles Fourier, who came up with the idea of communal socialism as the only way to cure society's ills. In Fourier's theory, and in order to create a utopian society, each communal group would consist of 1,620 persons, called a phalanx. Fourier thought that 1,620 people was the perfect number; they could become totally self-sufficient without creating the problems of a large government and loss of personal freedom.

Fourier's popular theories soon spread throughout Europe's universities, then communal socialism became an active movement. In time, established governments in Europe felt threatened by the public's new demands for socialist societies. There would be riots in both Germany and France and a brutal government suppression of those who believed in communal socialism. Communism, as we know it, would be completely shut down.

And all that did was take the movement underground. Those who still believed started discussing where they could possibly emigrate to, a magical place with clear rivers, fertile plains, abundant wildlife for food and a strong sense of independence. And that meant Texas.

Now the movement knew about the Lone Star State from the writings of Price Solms Braunfels, who had traveled to Texas in 1844 and both wrote and lectured about our state in universities back in Germany. The Fourier version of a communist movement fell in love with Braunfel's descriptions of our state and by 1847 they'd changed their name to the Men of the Forties and had saved enough money to bring their political movement here.

They first sent 33 young student members, who landed at Indianola in July of 1847; their job was to buy some land, build homes and plant crops for the thousands that would soon be arriving. Their leader, known just as Reinhardt, took the boys inland, camping on the prairies, living off of the wild game and singing A Free Life We Lead. In Llano County, they set up shop, made peace with Chief Satanta's Comanches and named their first village Bettina, after Bettina von Arnim, a highly respected author of the time. Their relationship with the Indians was so strong that, when thieves made off with the German students' goods, the Comanches caught the robbers, and rounded up the stolen cattle.

Then came 1848, and a drought killed the crop they'd planted. That's when Reinhardt learned a lesson that Russian communists never had. He wrote in his diary, "Since everyone was to work only if he pleased and when he pleased, the result was less and less work done as time progressed."

The next fall, Bettina was abandoned. The boys established a new farm, just outside of today's New Braunfels. The second wave of Commies was by then showing up; they would establish Sisterdale north of San Antonio - possibly their most successful socialist colony here in Texas.

The next year, 1849, came the French part of the Communist movement, the Icarians, who proposed creating a Republic of Unity and Brotherhood. Their plans would bring them to North Texas, right on the banks of Denton Creek, near today's Justin. But the land promoters who sold them their property had promised to erect cabins on the site, yet when the Icarians arrived from Galveston, no buildings were in place. And no one was prepared for the winter of 1849. Half of the Icarians died that winter. The survivors split up, half

migrating to a French settlement in southern Illinois.

The other half, mostly French, Belgian and Swiss, went to Dallas, to make one final attempt to turn Texas into a Communist Utopia in the mid-1850s. A former French military officer, Victor Considerant, had resigned his commission to lead the settlement, which would be called La Reunion.

Considerant originally planned to purchase 57,000 acres in West Texas; in fact, our own state was to provide the loans to make the land purchase. But, like most Communist ventures, this one ran into trouble from the get-go. First, before he could buy the land in West Texas, Considerant found out that the first 200 European commies had already sailed from Antwerp and would be arriving in Galveston any minute. Forced to buy land quickly, he purchased 2,000 acres three miles west of downtown Dallas - but he got taken, paying an unheard-of $7 an acre. That left him nothing with which to buy the larger acreage out in West Texas. And so, in April of 1855, those 200 Communists showed up in Big D, then known as Little D, having walked the entire distance on foot from Galveston.

Considerant was not happy with his new co-settlers. He'd demanded that the first immigrants sent over be farmers, carpenters and blacksmiths. Instead, virtually the entire group was made up of musicians, artists, watchmakers, dancers and professors. Obviously, that would have been great if the Morton Myerson had existed back then, but this was hardly the group to handle the large herd of cattle Considerant had purchased. In fact, it took them one whole day to brand just 25 cows; local cowboys, feeling sorry for them, came over to their spread and finished up the job for them.

Then came the next severe winter, 1855 - 56, which was so cold that the Trinity River froze over in May of 1856 - after La Reunion had already planted its crops for the spring. The houses they'd built couldn't stand up to the weather; and, once that legendary winter finally broke, in June, we had a good old-fashioned Texas drought, followed by a plague of locusts.

Why, the Communists got so depressed, the dancers didn't even want to dance.

Considerant, their leader, took off. And slowly the members of Dallas' own Communist movement, La Reunion, started drifting away into Big D. By the start of the Civil War, only 50 Communists remained on the 2,000 acres west of Dallas. In 1865 a court foreclosed on the property; everything, including a large painting of Fourier, the theoretical genius behind the Texas Communist Migration, was sold at public auction.

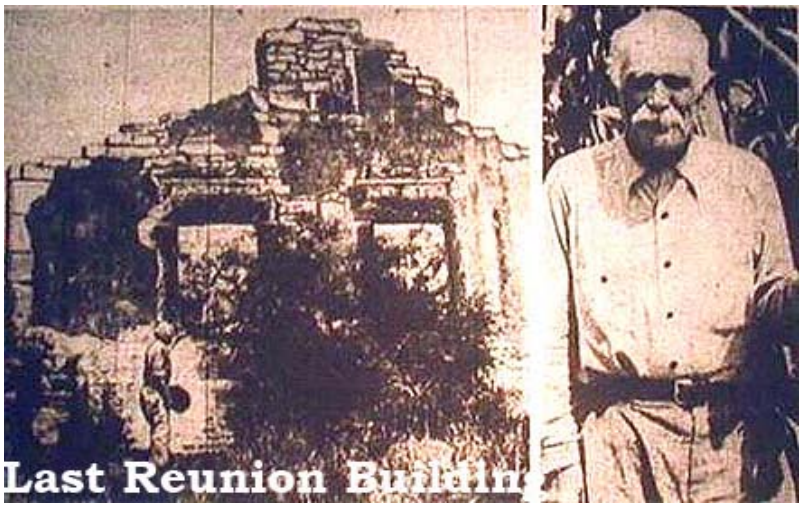
But, before you think their impact on Texas hasn't been felt, or that we should completely dismiss the European Communists' contributions to our state, think again.

Allyre Bureau of La Reunion, right here in Dallas, became a famous music composer; he wrote the tune that became "The Trolley Song," sung by Judy Garland in Meet Me in St. Louis.

Julien Reverchon became a famous naturalist; in fact, the park across the street from our radio station is named for him. Gustave Schleicher became one of our legendary Texas Rangers before being elected to Congress.

Dr. Ferdinand von Herff gave us chloroform to use in surgery.

And Admiral Chester A. Nimitz, commander of the U.S. naval forces in the Pacific in World War II, was the grandson of one of our very own Texas Communists.



And the watchmakers, dancers and musicians who first made up La Reunion? Well, as they moved into Dallas, they helped broaden our cultural base and became capitalists, helping the city to grow during the late 1800s. And today in the Hill Country, one can still see the remnants of the German Communist movement to Texas in the names of towns like New Braunfels,

Luckenbach and Sisterdale.

As a Utopia, Texas didn't exactly end up like the Communist immigrants had hoped it would. Who would have thought that our great state was once the dreamed-of destination for all of Europe's unhappy Commies?

22. America-Christian Nation?

It's an age-old debate: Was America founded as a Christian nation? One side claims a valid argument and the other side seems to come up with a reasonably plausible version also.

But the truth of the matter is even stranger, and it doesn't even start in this country. And the bias for all of today's debate is actually not about whether or not the United States was founded as a Christian nation, but whether or not we can be considered the Chosen Nation.

It all started back in 1519 in England - the White Horse Tavern, to be exact. That's where a group of Cambridge University scholars used to drink their pints while discussing the religious concepts of Martin Luther. Now, keep in mind that at the time, there wasn't really a published version of the Bible that the average person could read. Before Luther, there wasn't any debate on Biblical interpretation, for there was only one: the Catholic Church's.

William Tyndale was one of the White Horse Tavern set; he decided to ask the Bishop of London for permission to translate the New Testament into English, so the average person could read it. The Bishop refused Tyndale's request as being totally out of hand. In turn, Tyndale left for Germany to work with Martin Luther and to work out the translation on his own: It was published in 1526.

Influenced by Luther's view of religion, Tyndale worked on translating the five books of Moses. However, while translating the book of Deuteronomy, he was struck by God's covenant, or agreement, with his chosen people. Particularly the part where God promised to bless his people, but only if they remained faithful to him. This would be published in 1530, then a second edition of his New Testament would come out in 1534.

Now, that same year, the King of England, Henry the Eighth, was having a hard time with the Catholic Church. It wouldn't grant him a divorce from Catherine to marry Anne, so he created the Church of England to resolve his marital problems. This worked well for Tyndale, who was starting to preach that there was a real possibility that God's covenant with the Jews had extended to the British - that all they had to do was remain faithful to their Lord and in turn, God would bless them.

Of course, as you might imagine, now that many parts of the Bible were available in English, apparently the entire literate British population took to reading it. And, although Tyndale never absolutely, flatly stated that the Brits were God's chosen people, by the time Edward VI came to the throne in 1547 as a 9-year-old King, most British had bought into Tyndale's assumptions.

However, once so many people could read the Bible, then came the many different interpretations of it. These included the direct connection that many in the church saw between the 9-year-old Edward's ascension to the throne and the story of the 8-year-old Josiah, King of Israel. This only confirmed for others that England might well be God's new chosen country.

Now, a small group of Christians believed that if they could just reestablish an ancient Christian faith, England would become the kingdom of Christ. There was one small problem. Edward died in 1553, and Mary Tudor took the throne, being the daughter of Henry the Eighth and Catherine of Aragon. Mary hadn't agreed with her father's position to leave the Catholic Church; now she was determined to move England back under Rome's rule. Of course, then came the problem of those pesky Protestants, who wanted no such thing. She started executing them by the hundreds - hence her name, Bloody Mary.

Eight hundred of the most devout left England for the continent, lest they be killed; they would become known as the Marian Exiles. To their question, Why would God cause them to suffer so much?, their answer was simple: They had failed to reestablish the ancient Christian religion in England. Thus their self-imposed banishment, which was better than death.

Many of the Marian exiles had settled in Geneva, then under the control of John Calvin. Calvin, busy establishing exactly what the British fundamentalists had demanded, a Christian state, believed and preached that God had chosen certain people for salvation and others for damnation. Although, to Calvin's credit, he never argued that his Presbyterian model was the only correct Biblical view, the Marian Exiles didn't see it that way. What Calvin was really looking for, they thought, was a way to take power out of the hands of the Bishops and place it squarely in the hands of the people - as long as Calvin was their spiritual leader.

Well, Bloody Mary died in 1558, and Elizabeth the first came to the throne. At long last, they could safely return to their home country, but the Marian Exiles had a plan: They would quietly create an ancient Christian state out of England. They secured important teaching jobs at the best universities, wrote many works on their Biblical worldview and took over many of Britain's most influential pulpits. They did not separate from the Church of England, but worked within the system to change society.

There was a problem, of course: Elizabeth the First understood this fundamentalist view, so she was stuck with the Anglican view, the Catholics in her country and this new conservative group demanding a Christ-centered society so that a new covenant with God might be established for England. The Marian Exiles, getting nowhere fast, finally decided to break away from the Church of England; and on that date, they became Puritans.

OK, Elizabeth is now dead and James the First comes to the throne in 1603, having already ruled Scotland as James VI. James had no love for the troublemaking Puritans; as he once put it, he'd like to "harry them out of the land."

Of course, the Puritans had a plan of action to keep their followers loyal and out of the more moderate Church of England. It was based on extremely long sermons and then the demand that Puritan families return to their homes to meditate on the morning's service, invite their neighbors in and discuss their philosophy with them.

King James had already had enough; he had banned the Puritans' books, blocked their ministers' ability to make a living, even suggested that a couple of the most aggressive Puritan leaders be burned at the stake. They kept right on going, trying to establish a fundamentalist state in England. Then, James came up with an idea to block the Puritans once and for all. That tradition is with us to this day: It was 1618 when James published his Book of Sports.

Here's what the King decreed for his country: that from that day forward, Sunday would be a day of sports, or gaming, racing and so on. This would allow his subjects to interact publicly and without much thought to the morning religious service; it certainly kept the Puritans from proselytizing to others and claiming Sundays as their day to expound their fundamentalist views.

Now, laborers didn't have that great a life in England at that time, so the King's telling them to enjoy their Sundays watching or participating in sports seemed decent of him.

Many Puritans had already left England a decade before King James's sports decree, although they had gone to the Netherlands first, then hit America in 1620. Seeing that they were now eternally locked out of their plan for England, a second wave started the Massachusetts Bay Colony in 1630.

Of course, in their view of things, they would now establish that covenant with God in a new wilderness. Suddenly they started to find yet another parallel between the Bible and their circumstances: They were the Modern Children of Israel, fleeing to their Promised Land. Egypt became England, the Red Sea the Atlantic Ocean, and the Native Americans, the Canaanites. And they came to believe that they and they alone were truly God's Chosen People.

One of the first to reject that view was Roger Williams, who claimed that the Bible is absolute, not open to interpretation: Only the Jews, Williams said, were God's chosen people. He was banished from the colony, originally set to be exiled back to England - but he escaped that winter and managed to get Parliament to grant him a charter for Rhode Island. And then he started the Baptist faith.

Of course a key point here is this: The Puritans weren't the only religious group in America. The Dutch Reformed were already in Albany; Jamestown, although less successful, for the most part was populated by Anglicans. The Spaniards in the American West were Catholic, and so on. But the Puritans were the only group so fundamentalist in their views that they brooked no dissent. They preached that they were God's

chosen people and that this new land was the Promised Land.
Next week, how our Founding Fathers dealt with all of these conflicting religious views, how the Puritans lost their vision of this country, and why the Constitution was written the way it was.

But, in the interim, don't forget tomorrow's NFL games, brought to you on Sunday, because King James gave England the Book of Sports in 1618 and decreed the Sabbath to be a day of fun, just to stop the Puritans in their tracks.

Was America founded as a Christian nation? Last week we covered the migration of the Puritans to this country and how they had come to believe that if they could reestablish the ancient Christian faith, then they could become God's Chosen People. After all, their religious leaders had started to preach the similarities between the Puritans and the Israelites - where they had to flee persecution, England became Egypt, the Atlantic Ocean was the Red Sea, America the new promised land and the Indians morphed into the Canaanites, to be cleared from the land.

Meanwhile, in Europe, at nearly the exact same time as the Puritan migration, the first of the religious wars broke out across the continent. Keep in mind that during the 16th century, Christianity had splintered into the different Protestant faiths. Before that, it had spoken with one voice, that of the Catholic Church; and the only religious wars had been the Crusades hundreds of years earlier.

That soon changed when, in the late 1500s, armed conflict broke out between the Catholic Church and the Calvinists. Then the Thirty Years War, from 1618 to 1648, left a great deal of Europe in ruins.
Back in England, in 1640 came the Puritan Revolution there. Keep in mind that King James, whose name is on our Bible and who made Sunday a day of sports to stop the Puritans, still believed in Divine Right, that God had appointed him King. So did his son Charles I. They felt that they answered to a higher authority than Parliament, meaning they answered to no one at all. So, in the name of God, Charles I and Archbishop William Laud went on a campaign to further standardize the Anglican Church. Soon the two opposing hard-line religious factions in England fell into civil war.

As a historical point, during this period, those who refused to go along with the changes Charles made to the Anglican Church were called Nonconformists; it was the first time that label was used, and to this day it's used to belittle independent thinkers.

In the end, Charles the First was beheaded in 1649. That event sent shock waves throughout Europe, for Charles had not been beheaded by his rivals, but by the middle class of citizens.
Of course, when we talk about this period in history, we focus on the creation of our country; no one ever discusses the religious wars, Christians against Christians, the non-stop slaughter that swept across all of Europe in the name of God's love.

Then in 1624, an Englishman, Edward Lord Herbert of Cherbury, England, published his book De Veritate, describing why Christians would kill Christians. Herbert came up with the theory of God's second and unwritten Bible, which all Christians could come to agreement on.

Herbert had correctly theorized that the descent into Christian war had come about because of the distribution of the Bible into so many new languages, allowing many to give their interpretation of God's word. Before that, only the Catholic Church's interpretation of the Bible had been heard, so there had been no disagreement. But, with so many new and conflicting viewpoints, and the passion involved in religion, wars across all sectors of Christianity were inevitable. Unless common ground could be found for all Christians, the religious wars might never end.

Herbert noted in his book that God had given us two manuscripts to follow. The Bible was the more complex of the two, but His second manuscript was simple and self evident. For God's second book was the miraculous world - of nature. Herbert would preach that nature showed the fundamental truths that every Christian could believe in. After all, in Herbert's mind, how could one look at nature and suggest that there was no God? Nature also defined good and evil, a moral order of right and wrong that was apparent to everyone, every day, every time you looked around you. Even those who were illiterate, who couldn't read the Bible, could see God's glory everywhere.

Of course, this wasn't a theological work as much as it was a pragmatic attempt to stop the religious

wars. It would be Herbert who would first write that God's natural world gives us "truth that is self-evident." He challenged every religion to attempt to dispute his view of God's world.

However, while Herbert's words would carry down through the ages, they also gave rise to a more moderate version of religion known as Deism, the worship primarily of God, which relegates the story of the Holy Trinity to a secondary position. Today, most use the word Deist in a completely different manner than in prior centuries; back then you were of course a Christian, even if you were a Deist; the fundamental focus for your worship was a direct relationship with God and God's nature.

Herbert's book was published in 1624, and no one noticed, or necessarily agreed with him. That is, until the Puritan Revolution of 1640, when the blood of soldiers, passionate about their view of religion, ran in the streets of every major British city. Herbert's belief in God's second book of nature suddenly became credible, if for no other reason than being a possible way to stop the violence.

It would be seconded by Mathew Tindal's Christianity As Old as the Creation, published in 1730. Now, Deism is the first religious Christian viewpoint that preached toleration for all the different beliefs and interpretations. It simply stated: Here's what we have in common.

And that brings us to America and our Founding Fathers, with Thomas Jefferson as an important side note. Most were Deists. And you can hear this in the words of Benjamin Franklin, who wrote, "Here is my Creed. I believe in one God, Creator of the Universe. That he governs it by his Providence. That he ought to be worshipped." But you can hear the words of Herbert in our own Declaration of Independence, in the very first line: "And to assume among the Powers of the Earth, the separate and equal station to which the laws of nature and of Nature's God entitle them." The laws of nature and Nature's God, or Herbert's thesis on commonality in religion and religious tolerance.

Here's the second line, which Jefferson took almost verbatim from Herbert's work: "We hold these truths to be self-evident." Nature and Nature's God, these truths were self-evident. Tolerating all religious viewpoints; Deism, worshipping one God; being moral, having no religious wars. This view was not unique to Jefferson, Franklin or James Madison. That second unwritten book of the Bible - given from God, that of nature and the natural order - was widely believed in that century.

And so, in time, came our Constitution. How would we form our government in such a manner that the religious wars that had devastated Europe didn't happen here?

The first amendment, written by James Madison, set the tone: "Congress shall make no law respecting the establishment of religion, or prohibiting the free exercise thereof." That was the only way that the Puritans, Quakers, Anglicans, Catholics, Lutherans, Methodists, Dutch Reformed and Presbyterians then living in this country understood that religious wars just weren't going to happen. Not here.

But the debate today, of whether or not we were founded as a Christian nation: That's a non-starter. Remember, the nation came about because of the American Revolution; our Founding Fathers were trying to form our government with the Constitution. But there's nothing in our historical documents that even suggests that there be a separation of one's religious beliefs from our society or culture, just that our government was not going to favor one religion and its views over another - nor would it create a situation where one religion had any authority over anyone else's beliefs.

This is probably where the debate is so badly misunderstood today, because we are taking our current views and moving back in time with them. All Christian religions get along today; that's what the Founding Fathers set out to do. But the Founding Fathers also knew that that the Baptists and Methodists had suffered in Puritan-controlled territory. They knew that there was anti-Semitism for the few Jews here.

The opposing views of Protestants and the Catholic Church had come to America and would last right up until John F. Kennedy was elected; for those who don't recall, the word on the street was that America would never elect a Catholic president.

The only possible hold-up to this scheme of things might have been the fundamentalist Puritan view of things, but by that time they had ceased to be a factor. Their Calvinist views of some getting salvation while others were assured of damnation had been whittled away by their children and grandchildren, who refused to follow all the rules for Church membership, yet demanded that their own children be baptized. Church elders had fought bitterly over that issue; the conservative group believed that such children and grandchildren

should be put out of the church. But the moderates had come to power, and they couldn't bear to cleave their children and grandchildren from the teachings of the Bible. They allowed their grandchildren baptism. So fundamentalism gave way to a more open religious order.

But the religious wars, the advent of God's second unwritten Bible, that of nature and natural order, still weighed on the minds of our Founding Fathers, who discussed long and hard what our national seal should look like.

Franklin, recalling the beliefs of the Puritans, suggested Moses lifting his hand and parting the Red Sea, with the inscription, "Rebellion to tyrants is obedience to God." (Surprisingly, that is also one of the major tenets of the Shiite branch of Islam.) Jefferson had similar thoughts, showing the children of Israel led by a pillar of fire. But, in the end, Thomas Paine's words would dictate all, "It is as if we had lived in the beginning of time."

You can pull out any dollar bill and understand the viewpoint of our Founding Fathers. The Great Seal of the United States is centered in a barren desert, which symbolizes all of history before the founding of this country. Meaning we should wash away all the mistakes made throughout history and start anew. The pyramid is America, incomplete, to signify that the American experiment is far from finished. There is a single eye of God looking down on us, the Deist point of view. The inscription at the top means, "He has favored our undertaking," and at the bottom, the most important line, a new order of the ages.

It is the symbol of our blessing and our curse. Nothing came before us, and all the evil of history wiped clean with our founding. Which is why we don't know the history, which so profoundly influenced our Founding Fathers.

Today the debate goes on as to whether we were founded as a Christian nation. And the answer is no: The nation was founded with the Revolution, which was fought against British tyranny and was secular in nature. But our government realized that our citizens were all profoundly religious and therefore freedom of religion was guaranteed for all beliefs. Because no one wanted the European religious wars to come to America, not then and not now.

Which brings up the most troubling part of today's debate, those who want to rewrite our history, in order to make their version of Christianity the dominant view. It's the same battle that's been going on for 500 years - which is exactly what our Founding Fathers didn't believe in. They took the more populist view of Edward Lord Herbert, who gave us God's unwritten Bible, that of nature and nature's God, the common belief that we all believe in, God.

Herbert's views helped end the European religious wars and kept them out of America. It would probably be a good idea not to start them up today.

23. Detroit Fights in Russian Revolution

Murmansk, Russia: 69.0° N 33.0° E. Long, bitterly cold winters combined with short and cool summers; located in Northwestern Russia. Although today few Americans have even heard of this Russian city, by 2005 it might become as well known as any major oil port delivering our petroleum needs from Middle Eastern countries. That's because four of Russia's major oil companies have now committed to creating a $1.5-billion, 935-mile oil pipeline; oil analysts believe that it will shortly provide us with 10% of our oil needs.

How ironic. In that same city of Murmansk, 84 years ago, 4,400 American soldiers, mostly farm boys and autoworkers from Michigan, were trapped behind enemy lines. In the communist nation emerging after the end of the First World War, those men were forced to fight in the Russian Revolution against the Bolsheviks.

It's also ironic, if a little amazing, that while most Russians know the story by heart, few Americans know of our involvement in that war. As proof of our national ignorance of the facts, in 1972 President Richard Nixon, then traveling in Russia, said in a TV interview, "Most important of all, we have never fought one another in war." President Reagan compounded Nixon's historical gaffe in 1984, when he informed a visiting Russian diplomat that "Our sons and daughters have never found each other in war."

In the Second World War, Detroit virtually overnight mobilized the entire industry and converted it to create war materiel, so our soldiers could fight the Axis powers. Nothing like that happened the first time around: Great controversy arose about our even getting involved in the Great War. Billy Durant, then head of General Motors, refused to involve his company in creating weapons of mass destruction to further the carnage. Cadillac's creator and then head, Wilfred Leland, resigned from GM over Durant's decision. Just three years earlier, Henry Ford had leased a Swedish merchant boat and renamed it the Peace Ship; he filled it with anti-war activists and tried desperately to sail to Europe and negotiate an end to the hostilities.

Still, when President Wilson committed our nation to that conflict, many autoworkers in Michigan became Doughboys, volunteering to go fight and "make the world safe for democracy." Typically, they weren't teenage boys, either. Harold Laird was 28 and working as a plant manager for the Dodge Brothers, while George Albers had just celebrated his 27th birthday. With Henry Abel, nearing his 30th year, and John Bigelow, 22, they would be four of the 4,400 men who would comprise the Michigan 339th - or, as the press renamed them, "Detroit's Finest."

Military training took place during the summer of 1918 at Camp Custer just outside of Battle Creek. (I think the men should have recognized as an omen that the military base had been named for General George Armstrong Custer.) Shortly after their six weeks of military training the group set sail for England, landing in Liverpool on August 4th. The city's church bells rang as this latest group of American soldiers paraded through the streets to the train waiting to carry them to Camp Cowshot, near Surrey. There, Detroit's Finest would begin to realize that something was seriously wrong; they couldn't have suspected that they were about to be thrown away. They were destined for use as disposable pawns in the 20th-century political war-games brewing between Capitalism and the emerging Communist Threat.

What our boys didn't know is that Britain was committed to stopping Lenin at any cost. England's powerful didn't care for the fact that Lenin had recently told the workers of India to rise up against their British masters. No one knew how this madman might in time upset the neat and tidy colonial world the British had taken so long to set up. To be on the safe side, then, the British had already inserted a group of Royal Marines into Northern Russia. Ostensibly, their mission was to guard the 5,000,000 tons of munitions the allies had unloaded in Archangel for the Czar's troops; now those weapons were likely to fall into the Red Army's hands. While President Wilson declined Britain's request for our full participation in the Russian Revolution, he did finally agree to let the Michigan soldiers enter the conflict - to help safeguard those munitions.

Back in England the men of the Michigan 339th had heard no official announcement of their selection for this honor. The first they realized that something had gone astray was on August 25th, when their American weapons were taken from them and replaced with Russian-made rifles, and they were issued Arctic gear. Within hours they were boarded onto a troop convoy in Newcastle; once under sail, they were told their final destination: Russia.

Our boys were already in trouble, for the Spanish Flu ran rampant through the ship, killing close to 500 of them. Others stood on deck for the 11-day voyage, watching the ice floes and wondering how they were being assigned to this fight when their intentions had been to help end the war in France. Then, just before landing, a few soldiers on deck noticed a large group of polar bears on the ice and decided that was their fate - hunting for survival in a no-man's-land. From that day forward, the Michigan 399th would forever be known as the Michigan Polar Bears.

They landed at Archangel on September 4, 1918, not realizing that the end of the Great War was little more than 60 days away, or that their war was just beginning. Immediately stories in the Russian press reported that the Americans had come in much larger strength, 100,000 men. Within a week Pravda ran an article claiming that the Red

Army had wiped out the American invaders to the last man. That story, in turn, would be published in the Detroit newspapers, causing Michigan families to believe that their loved ones had all been lost.

But the Michigan Polar Bears were alive - and fighting from Archangel to Murmansk during one of the most brutally cold winters in a century. Things got so bad that on December 3rd, knowing the Armistice had been signed ending the war, 300 of the 2,500 British Royal Marines refused to come out of their quarters and fight. Those men needn't have feared the Russian army; their own commanders opened fire on their barracks with Stokes mortars as an inducement to fall into formation. Of those who survived the friendly fire reminding them of their duty, 19 were executed for cowardice.

No such inducement was needed for the Detroit boys; they were out in battle constantly. By Christmas the temperatures had fallen to 40 below zero and still they fought, for the Polar Bears were the toughest of the tough. Industrial laborers from Detroit or fresh off the farm, they understood survival in grueling, adversarial conditions. Even taking your glove off to light a cigarette might be enough to give one frostbite; Christmas dinner that year, a meal of rancid meat, would end up causing many of the men to come down with food poisoning.

And still they fought.

However, back in Detroit, once the families realized that many of their sons and husbands were still alive in Russia, they petitioned Washington to bring their boys home.

In February of 1919, Senator Hiram Johnson of California addressed that issue on the Senate floor, claiming that England had duped us into battle in Russia, and it was far past time for our surviving men to return to their homes.

One problem: The severity of Russia's winter weather made it impossible to get ships in to retrieve the Polar Bears; thus, isolated from the rest of the world, the war continued for them. We wanted them home, but couldn't get through to retrieve them.

Finally, on June 14th, 1919 our boys saw the first American boats, led by a few Ford Eagle cruisers, break through the last ice floes and dock in Archangel. We had finally kept our promise to get our men. Of the 3,900 men who had survived the flu to fight in Russia, 244 lost their lives in the Russian Revolution. Only Detroit gave them a parade on their return; there would be no campaign medals.

In 1929, five former Polar Bears were allowed to return to Russia to retrieve the bodies of their fallen comrades; only 86 were recovered.

Having lived and fought in and survived hell together, the remaining Polar Bears held reunions every year until 1983; at that point the group had only 22 surviving members. Harold Laird would return to the Dodge Brothers before moving to California in the early '20s. He spent his last days in Fort Worth and is buried at Greenwood. A fellow Polar Bear flew in from Michigan and gave the eulogy at his funeral in 1975. He was my grandfather.

24. He Sold the World on Texas

HE WASN'T EVEN AN AMERICAN, but he may have done more to make Texas the state it is today than any American did. He loved the state and the people he brought here so much that he died penniless, so others would not be harmed financially.

His name was Jacob de Cordova, and he is one of the true heroes of Texas history.

Just outside of Kingston, Jamaica, his mother died giving birth to Jacob on June 6th, 1808. He was the youngest of three sons. His father Raphael was a well-to-do coffee grower and exporter; with so much to do and his wife dead, he sent baby Jacob to live with one of his aunts in England. Jacob took to his education there well, becoming fluent in English, French, Spanish, German and Hebrew. Jacob soon found his way back to Jamaica, where he soon discovered that he had developed tuberculosis; his physician told him he would need to move to a less humid climate if he expected to survive.

So, not knowing any better, Jacob chose Philadelphia, where his father had moved just a few years earlier. There he met and married Rebecca Sterling in 1826. Jacob decided to learn the art of printing, possibly

just because some of his ancestors had been printers for almost 300 years. You see, it was the de Cordova family in Spain that had originally published the book of Cabeza De Vaca's explorations in Texas in the 16th century.

After learning his new trade, and realizing that Philadelphia wasn't the dry climate he needed to get well, he returned to Jamaica and started his own newspaper, the Kingston Daily Gleaner, and it was an immediate success. In fact, it stayed in business for almost 150 years. However, Jacob's health soon failed him again and it was time to move on. So he was off to New Orleans - but now the promise of Texas was all our young Jewish friend could think about. So Jacob took to reading everything he could about Texas, and one thing he read bothered him more than anything else. It seems that the government of Mexico would not allow Jews to come to Texas - unless they renounced their religion and converted to the Catholic faith. Should they refuse, their properties would be seized and they would be forced into exile. Well, that reminded Jacob of his own family's past in Spain, during the Inquisition, when Jews were forced to convert or leave the country. So, when the Texas War for Independence started, Jacob not only read the published reports of the battles, but he also spent whatever money he had shipping goods to the Texas militia fighting the war.

Then, when our state's Declaration of Independence was signed, Jacob noticed that it promised religious freedoms for all; and so at 20 years of age, when he boarded a ship sailing for Galveston, he knew Texas would become his permanent home.

JACOB DE CORDOVA

Jacob and Rebecca de Cordova moved to Houston, where he became a successful merchant; but the humid Gulf Coast climate caused his health to fail again. When yet another doctor informed him that to survive he would have to move to a more arid region, this time he stood his ground: He wasn't going to leave the state. His doctor suggested that he consider moving to the wilderness, just past the Brazos River.

Leaving his wife in charge of their business, Jacob set out on horseback to see what Texas was all about. Now, his family had once published accounts of the first exploration of this state, but there really weren't any maps of the region available. So Jacob started drawing them on his quest. Actually, he became an expert on much of the central part of the state, finding where the rivers ran, where the tributaries joined them, and what the soil conditions were. And finally, he started using his own money to buy up properties - and he applied for land grants wherever he could. It was his compilation of Texas Maps published in 1849 that Sam Houston bragged about in the US Senate that year. Just before that brag, by the time that Texas became the twenty-eighth state in 1845, Jacob had close to a million acres under his control. And two years later, he ran for the State Legislature under the platform of bringing more people to Texas and developing the state. He won the election. And he wasn't done yet; in fact, Jacob was just getting started.

In 1848 and 49, Jacob and his brother Phineas, who had just joined him, started laying out one of his visions, a beautiful city on a river. You've heard of the place, today we call it Waco. Then his wife suggested that much of their land should simply be given away, for churches of any denomination, schools and government buildings. That wasn't a problem for Jacob, who thought it was a splendid idea. In Austin, he fought for laws to encourage development and won. Then he started yet another newspaper, the Texas Herald, which he used to tell others about the wonders of our state, the opportunities it offered to everyone, equally. And he distributed that newspaper everywhere in America - from trading posts to the docks in New York, in stage line offices and in every store where railroad travelers shopped. But even that wasn't enough for Jacob; he went out on tour, visiting New York, Philadelphia, every major East Coast city, all the way to Manchester, England. And all he had to say was, if you aren't in Texas, you're nowhere.

His speeches were reprinted and published everywhere. And sure enough, if you build a state, they will come - and they came to Texas, by the thousands. Many of them bought land on credit from Jacob, who prospered during the 1850s; without a doubt, Jacob de Cordova was the man who put Texas on the map as the place that anyone moving west should want to make their permanent home.

He moved his family to a fine new home in Seguin, but their financial position in life was about to

take a serious turn for the worse. It was of course, the Civil War. But, even in his failure, this would be the most important part of Jacob de Cordova's life.

The war devastated the economy in this state. Quickly after the start of hostilities, the Union Navy blockaded the ports at Houston, Galveston and Indianola. Of course, cotton was the state's real cash crop for those who farmed around the Brazos, and now there was no way to get it shipped out of state. Jacob for his part was in the process of trying to get a power plant on line in Bosque County to spin the cotton for shipment. Many of those farmers and settlers owed Jacob for their mortgages, but could no longer pay for their land; by the same token, Jacob was seriously in debt to his creditors and could have easily managed his financial problems if he had just used the courts to foreclose on those individuals that owed him money. He couldn't do it.

Yes, if they didn't get the payments they demanded, Jacob's creditors had promised to ruin him financially; yet he felt personally responsible for having brought these people to Texas. And if he foreclosed on those individuals, then he believed that made him responsible for misleading them -telling them they could have a better life, and then causing their ruin. In the depths of his financial crisis, Jacob wrote a letter to everyone that owed him money and said he understood their financial problems due to the war and not to worry about paying him until better days returned to Texas.

His creditors for their part kept their promise and ruined him. But Jacob De Cordova, the Jew who believed in his vision of what Texas would one day be, never foreclosed on one person he had lent money to for land.

After the war, his creditors took their money to settle Jacob's debts.

Broken financially, his health again failing, he moved to a small house just outside of Waco, and that's where Jacob de Cordova passed away in 1868. His last years were more rewarding than one might think, for every day he could see his neighbors farming their lands and watch the growth of Waco, which he had helped start. He had given away thousands and thousands of acres so others could have a life, even though it had cost him his personal fortune.

Today when one talks about Texas history, you hear the stories of the Alamo, the Battle of San Jacinto, the trail drives and the Texas Rangers, or how the railroad came to town and so on. But, somehow, we've missed the story of the man who was most responsible for selling the world on coming to Texas.

Maybe it was because he was a Jew, although that should not have mattered; and, as he was also one of the founders of the Houston Chamber of Commerce, it's reasonable to believe he was well accepted in that town. Maybe it was because he was not an American citizen - but that probably helped him in his attempts to bring new immigrants here.

Or maybe his contributions are dismissed because he was a very successful land agent and mortgage broker; but that doesn't explain why he chose to go bankrupt - why he refused to put anyone off his properties who had trusted him and moved here through the same misery.

And so the Jewish boy from Jamaica, the man who sold the Texas dream, the man who gave up everything late in life so that he could keep his integrity and his promises to others, left us all. And yet there's hardly a footnote about him in Texas history, unless you live near de Cordova Bend outside of Granbury. It is named in memory of a dreamer who saw and was instrumental in building what Texas is all about.

25. Crime in America

Turn on any newscast tonight, and you'll be bombarded with stories of violent crimes, criminals who have eluded capture, and criminals caught but released by some judge over a legal technicality. It makes you dream of a simpler time, when you could sleep soundly in your bed with your front door unlocked and not fear becoming the victim of a crime in the middle of the night. It makes you long for the times when criminals were caught quickly, and justice was swiftly executed by our courts.

Today the media run story after story, highlighting how violent crime rates have been rising for decades, showing us courts made impotent by liberal Supreme Court rulings that favor the criminal at the victims' or their families' expense. The only problem is, not one of these problems is a new reality. It's safe to say that it has always been that way in our country.

Let's start with the crime issue. To illustrate our point, we'll pull a newspaper editorial from the late eighteen hundreds. To be exact, the Charlestown News and Chronicle from 1898. I quote from that article, "Murder and violence are the distinguishing marks of our civilization." Funny, I thought that period was known as the Gay Nineties.

Now if we travel back even further in time we find this editorial from Leslie's Weekly, one of the nation's most popular magazines in the mid-eighteen hundreds. This from an issue published in 1868. "Each day we see ghastly records of crime ... murder seems to have run riot and each citizen asks, "Who is safe?" Of course, many people would say that America was expanding into our frontiers back in the mid-1800s, and that reason alone would lead one to believe that a person out in the Western frontier would be prone to have an act of violence committed against them. But that's not really where most of the nation's crime increases came from. Matt Dillon killed more people in one month's worth of Gunsmoke episodes than were killed in a year in the real Dodge City. No, violent crime then, as now, was a function of the big city.

In 1857 George Templeton Strong of New York wrote in his diary, "Most of my friends are investing in revolvers and carry them about at night." Strong added that nocturnal fear of assault was a city tradition. Wood's Illustrated Handbook of New York in 1872 warned visitors to the city not to "walk alone at night, and if you should want to go to a local dance hall, walk escorted with a police officer."

Long before the days of Al Capone, Chicago was known as the crime capital of the world. In the period of 1870 to 1890 murder rates in the Windy City quadrupled. In fact, Chicago's murder rate was eight times that of Paris for the same period. In 1893 alone Chicago police arrested one out of every 11 citizens for some type of crime. Today we'd have to arrest close to 370,000 people right here in the Metroplex to achieve that statistic.

In fact, contrary to what you believe today, the period of 1850 to 1910 gave our country the highest increases in crime that it's ever known. History experts believe that the national crime rate grew more than twice as fast as our population during that period.

On the other side of that coin, and contrary to what the media tells you, crime has been going down in this country for the past forty years. Oh, it's true: You see, since 1960 our population in America has nearly doubled, but this time the crime rates haven't even kept up with the population increase. Sure, as numbers, a statistic out of context, crime has gone up, but not nearly as fast as the population at large. Therefore, as a percentage of total Americans, crime has gone down, way down. We just don't see it that way because it is now constantly reported.

Of course, maybe another reason we think crime is way up is the career criminal. You know the one, the guy that commits crime after crime and once caught, gets his case thrown out of court on some legal technicality. Maybe we didn't read them their rights, maybe the search and seizure was illegally performed. But, as it turns out, these aren't new court rulings from the sixties, like Miranda or Escobedo. Those cases were simply reaffirming what our courts had been doing for decades.

Here's one for you. A few weeks back we did the story of the Black Legion. Looking back, sure enough we find that there were many arrests of their members, most of those cases thrown out of court. On what basis, you ask? Illegal search and seizure of their automobiles during a routine traffic stop, therefore making the guns and bombs found in a Black Legion member's car evidence inadmissible in court. See, you thought that was a modern ruling by our courts, but the story I just told you was from the thirties.

Complaints about our court system can be traced all the way back to the 1880s. One journalist wrote then, "No one respects the law, no one respects the court, and the courts don't respect themselves." It was also written just before 1900 that our courts would never convict a rich man, and that the rich could and did get away with murder. Shades of OJ.

Other judges ran a racket that literally made them rich. In many major cities, two judges would

partner up; one would take money to issue Certificates of Insanity to criminals coming up for trial. Then the other judge would throw out the case because the person was insane at the time of the crime, and the two judges would pocket the money. Again, an insanity defense in court is not new; that judicial racket was quite common in the 1880s.

Here's a quote you know well from today's coverage of criminal court cases: "The law so favors the criminal that trials are more of a game of chance." Know which president said that? William Howard Taft, at the turn of the last century.

Here's another, "Everybody knows full well that court procedures unduly favor the criminal. In our desire to be merciful the pendulum has swung in favor of the prisoner and far away from the protection of society." That could have been any quote from any law enforcement official last night, but it wasn't. That was Herbert Hoover in 1929.

One of the reasons that lynchings were so prevalent in the South from the end of the Civil War through the 1950s is because so many Southern citizens believed that our courts were completely incapable of getting convictions. After all, if the court would convict someone, there'd be no need to haul anybody out of jail and string him up in the middle of the night.

Oh sure, many lynchings were based on racial hatred; many happened when a group of Klansmen wanted to instill in their local African-American community fear and terror, but not all of them. Additionally, a great number of those lynched were white, and some were women. Here's something about mob rule you probably didn't know: From the end of the Civil War until 1893, more white people were lynched in the South than blacks. And it was during that period that the Klan's violence was at its peak. Yet today's history books never show a picture of a dead white person hanging from a tree after a midnight necktie party. Nor do our history books explain that the reason lynchings were so common was that the average person firmly believed that our court system had failed to work.

So, how many people were lynched in the South? The total figure no one knows. But we do know the number for a specific period of time: from 1882 to 1903, 3,337 people judged by their peers, found guilty and hung without benefit of a trial.

And I should point out again that many lynchings were simply the work of evil people doing harm to innocent blacks - but before 1893, they weren't the majority.

Still, here we are today, thinking that our courts are totally screwed up and crime is everywhere. That may be true, but it turns out it has always been that way. However, once you understand that crime and a deep-seated distrust of our court system have always been a part of the American landscape, then you realize we're actually living in the "good old days" as far as being safe from criminals is concerned.

History has a tendency to mute the harsh realities of the past, to highlight only the successes. History also leads you to believe that the only things that happened in the past were good things - or else they were bad circumstances that we as a nation managed to overcome.

Still, in our history, we never go backward, only forward and upward, a historical misrepresentation of the American condition that has also been a constant. Maybe this entire story can best be summed up by something Abraham Lincoln once said: "The dogmas of the quiet past are inadequate to the stormy present." Stormy present? Forgetting the dogmas of our past? Seems that statement is as true today as it was when Lincoln said it in 1862. But you won't hear that on the news tonight either.

26. No Wonder He Needed a Fort

Johann Augustus was born in Switzerland. In his chosen profession as a shopkeeper there, he was a miserable failure. In time his business collapses would cost him so much that he lost his home; his debts mounted so high that the Swiss government suggested he might be happier in another country, so America it was.

First in New York, then Cincinnati, St. Louis, and the Santa Fe Trail, possibly somewhere along the line, Johann Augustus started thinking that his dreams weren't big enough. He decided he wanted his own country so he could be its emperor.

So, Johann moved to a sparsely settled area of Mexico in 1838. Immediately, he went to the provincial capital at Monterrey to speak with the local governor. Now, in spite of his non-stop streak of business failures, those who knew him always maintained that his gift of salesmanship was second to none. Dressed in an official looking uniform with a large plumed hat, and referring to himself as Captain, Johann asked the governor for a large land grant. He would call it New Helvetia, and he would personally see to it that this section of Mexico was restricted to European immigrants, those who could live in peace with the local Mexican population. And he would keep those two-timing American settlers out of the region. As I said, Johann Augustus was a salesman; right then and there, the Mexican governor granted him 76 square miles of territory, with two stipulations. First, Johann would have to become a Mexican citizen. Second, per the contract, he would have to promise to keep "adventurers from the United States" out of his land.

Johann in one meeting had become a king with his own kingdom. New Helvetia had come into being.

He went to work to ensure the success of his new estate, first by promptly going back on his promise to the Mexican government and encouraging the rascally American settlers to come on down. Then he set about building his own castle and fortress; covering five acres, it had 18-foot walls.

Johann purchased used cannons from the Russians, who were leaving the area, and talked shop owners into coming to his kingdom. It thus gained a blacksmith, a general store and a winery. Mormons ran his tannery, Indians his wheat fields; French Canadian trappers sold him their furs.

By 1846, Johann owned 12,000 head of cattle, a couple of thousand horses and 10,000 sheep, and life was finally looking good for the man.

But, then came the problems; first was the war with Mexico, although the battles never came close to his kingdom. Mexico's losing posed a bigger problem: Johann lost his support.

But before that, in 1845, he had hired a half-crazed farmer named James Wilson Marshall. A loon really, opinionated and bad-tempered; but he and Johann got along well enough, and his self-confidence was strong.

By 1847 the need for lumber was growing, particularly as Johann wanted to build an entire town around his castle. But most of the local trees had been cut down, so Marshall took off with a scouting party, going 50 miles upriver. He claimed he could build and operate a working sawmill, but the river was so rough, no one knew how he could possibly float the trees down. Didn't matter: Marshall was given the go-ahead for the project.

I t was a tough go. They started construction in the fall, and it was a brutal winter; worse, the water out of the river tasted horrible. And that's all the men had to drink. Finally, one of the cooks, who had worked in South America, said the heavy mineral water tasted exactly like a river he'd once worked beside as a gold miner.

The next morning, January 19, 1848, James Marshall looked into the river and saw a gold nugget, then another and another. The California Gold Rush was on.

That's right, when I said the man's name was Johann Augustus, I didn't mention his last name. Sutter. And Monterrey is now in California, then Mexico. But now came those problems: When the United States won the war with Mexico, that pretty well invalidated Sutter's land grants. He was hoping to tie everything up in court for years, but he knew he no longer held title to the land. More important, if the word got out that California's rivers held gold, he wasn't prepared to make a fortune off the prospectors that he knew would flood the area. So he swore everyone to secrecy until his city was finished. As one might imagine, a secret like that couldn't be kept. One of the workers at the sawmill bought a bottle of brandy with a gold nugget: The barkeep asked him where he got it, and the word was out.

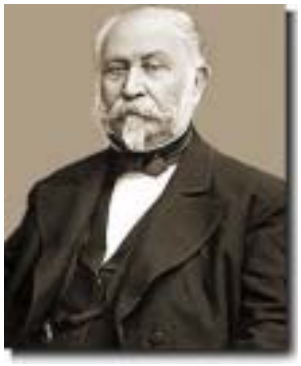
And nothing happened. It was as if no one cared. In fact, Sam Brannan owned the general store at Sutter's Fort and published a newspaper in San Francisco; he published the story about the gold find, and nothing happened.

Brannan made his next move: He bought up literally every pick, shovel and wheelbarrow in San

Francisco, took the supplies to his store at Sutter's Fort, and then went back to San Francisco, pouring gold dust out of bottles while screaming, "Gold's been found in the American River!" That did the trick.
Within three weeks, half of the population of San Francisco had gone looking for gold. By that autumn, two thirds of the men living in Oregon had moved south.

And then they poured in from all over America, looking to find their riches. They overran Sutter's land, which he no longer owned. They killed his cattle and sheep for food, stole his horses and mules, put up camps in his wheat fields and expropriated anything that wasn't nailed down.
Sutter turned for help to the US government. They couldn't have cared less about his former Mexican land grant, and they cared even less because he was now a Mexican citizen. Everyone else made money, but Sutter was wiped out; he declared bankruptcy in 1852.

He moved north with his family, but rustlers stole his new herd and vigilantes fired his new home. And so Johann Augustus Sutter picked up what little he had left and moved to Pennsylvania.



Marshall tried to hold onto the mill, but his fate was the same. Prospectors overran the place and drove him out. He sank into madness and alcoholism. Sam Brannan, the general store owner and newspaper publisher, became California's first millionaire.
But Sutter wasn't done quite yet. After all, the gold found on his Mexican estate had financed two wars for the U.S. Government; almost eight hundred million in gold had come from the rivers he once held title to, worth 19 billion today.
So, in 1880, the 77-year-old Sutter went before Congress and reminded them of his contributions to the wealth of America, the money that had helped win the Civil War. A bill was proposed to give the old man a one-time reimbursement grant of $50,000. Yes, Congress seemed amenable to his request, but adjourned for the summer without passing the bill, and Johann Augustus Sutter died two days later.
Marshall fared a little better. He convinced the California legislature to grant him an income of $100 a month for his troubles, renewable in two-year periods. That wasn't bad money, but on his first trip back to renew the request, a brandy bottle fell out of his pocket, so incensing the representatives that they cut him off without another penny. He too would die broke.

You've always heard the story of Sutter's Fort and Sutter's Mill; you just didn't realize how tragic it really was.

27. Oil!!! But He Died Broke

In the days before the Civil War, there was poverty; there were respectable occupations and financiers more than willing to swindle the public with a worthless stock promotion, just like today.

And that was a problem for James Townsend, who was the president of the City Bank of New Haven, Connecticut, and the primary investor in a new company, which he quickly found out was nothing more than a stock promotion scam.

Now originally this deal had been put together by a couple of New York lawyers, who knew full well they were trying to get rich quick off the deal while defrauding their investors. And, although Townsend realized he'd been set up as a mark, losing his own personal money didn't bother him all that much. However, losing the respect of the people of New Haven if the scam were ever uncovered could well cost him his legitimate and respected job as the president of their local bank.

Making the problem of what to do even more depressing, deep in his heart Townsend believed in what this company was trying to do. But it had no money to move forward, and if he raised more money to get the company up and running, and the shyster attorneys in New York were fully intent on fraud, then again he stood to lose the job security he already had as a bank president.

The company in question was Seneca Oil, with rights to the oil around Titusville, Pennsylvania.
Now Townsend had shown his due diligence, had chemists test the oil that came from Titusville and they'd

certified it as perfect for lighting fuel and as an industrial lubricant. In fact, those chemists suggested that it might bring $20 a barrel, but only if you could get it out of the ground cheaply enough.

And one night, at his hotel room, Townsend was discussing his problems with a fellow guest, one whose bad back had just cost him his job as a railroad conductor. This guy was the least likely person one would think a banker would discuss a business problem with, for this other gentleman was functionally illiterate, a badly educated farm boy from New York. Yet the banker told his tale of woe, that he needed a driven and hardworking man to take over these fields and find some way to get the oil out of the ground - and who would work for virtually nothing.

The unemployed railroad conductor was just the man, and his name was Edwin Drake. Drake knew nothing about oil and was frail and sickly; but he got the job anyhow, because he still had his railroad pass, which meant he could travel to Pennsylvania for free.

There were other factors. Drake was serious and appeared trustworthy, which in a company primarily created as a stock scam would be important to other would-be investors.

Townsend also offered Drake stock in the company, if he made an investment of $200; Drake bought and later said, “My friend pulled me in, trying to get himself out.”

Drake arrived in Titusville in 1858. Now, it should be noted that oil wasn’t in use at the time for anything other than patent medicine. No one had any real use for it, and drilling rigs or derricks hadn’t been invented; oil was captured by digging shallow pits into the ground, the oil would seep in and it would be canned from there. But about six gallons a day was all you could get that way, and six gallons wouldn’t pay Drake’s salary.

George Bissell, another investor in the company, came up with the idea that oil could be gotten out of the ground like salt water, pumped up to the surface; Bissell believed that oil lay in pools down deep. Most thought the man crazy, but not Drake, because he could hardly read, much less think like a geologist. So he built a derrick and hired Uncle Billy Smith to dig the hole, bought a steam-power boat engine to provide the power, and they were off. To nowhere.

Because every time the hole was dug deep enough, water and mud collapsed the sidewalls and nothing was accomplished.

Then Drake had an idea. Why not pound a pipe into the ground until it hit bedrock, and then operate the drill inside of the pipe? Drake (as we mentioned, not all that bright) didn’t realize that if he patented that idea, he would have become one of the richest men in America, for the plan worked perfectly. That technique’s still used today to get oil out of the ground.

But, I’m ahead of the story. Townsend, back in New Haven, refused to advance any more money; the partners in New York also refused to kick in, but Drake wouldn’t quit. He used what little money he had left to keep going. Moreover, the people and farmers of Titusville actually liked the guy; they thought he was decent and fair, so they came and helped out for free. They also fed him when he was hungry and loaned him money when he needed another piece of pipe.

And it was all insane; Drake believed that oil was at least 1,000 feet down, yet after a year had only managed to get 70 feet of pipe into the soil. At that rate, he might hit the oil pool in another 14 years. But he wouldn’t give up.

It was Sunday, August 28, 1859, when Uncle Billy came up with more bad news; water had filled up the 70 feet of pipe and was within 10 feet of the surface, meaning it had to be bailed out to dig any more. Smith, taking it all in stride, got out a pail and put it on a rope to start bailing; only, when he brought up the bucket the first time, it wasn’t water filling the pipe, it was oil.

He ran for Drake. The two men ran back to the well and that day pumped out twenty barrels of oil, 280 times more than anyone had ever captured in one day.

The word was out: Oil had been found. Within a few months Titusville went from a village of a couple hundred people to over 15,000 population. Land prices went through the roof; blacksmiths made more money in one day renting teams and wagons than they'd made the whole year before. Barrel makers were on their way to being millionaires, and local merchants were marking up their products 1000% and still selling out daily.

Everyone in Titusville got rich except Edwin Drake. Drake refused to lease his own land, buy local property and enrich himself on the rising values; no, he was the general manager of Seneca Oil, and his honor forbade him to profit personally from the system he'd developed for oil drilling.

That may have been his mistake, for just seven months after Drake had created the modern oil age, the owners of Seneca Oil fired him. Humiliated, he sold them his stock back for nothing, and then became Justice of the Peace in Titusville, a job given him because the people of the city trusted his integrity. It would be Drake who would notarize the leases that made so many others wealthy.

Jonathan Watson, who owned the land Seneca drilled on, made $3 million, local merchant Charles Hyde earned $1.5 million; and Drake was living on a JP's salary. Yet, his discovery made the Union rich during the Civil War, along with Seneca's investors.

Finally, Wall Street came calling to hire Edwin Drake as an oil broker, and he leapt at his first chance in life to make serious money. But shortly thereafter, in 1866, when oil prices collapsed after the war, Wall Street cast Drake aside.

In 1869, just three years later, Zeb Martin, from Titusville, ran into Edwin Drake in New York, but almost didn't recognize him. In just 10 years he seemed to have aged 50; the always neat dresser of 1859 was now wearing old and worn clothing, and he was completely bent over from his back pain, which had grown worse. Drake told Zeb he was living in a rent-free cottage near the ocean, living off his wife's needlepoint and in New York looking to find a job for his 12-year-old son, his only hope of having some type of real living income.

Zeb Martin returned to Titusville, told others of Drake's plight and asked for help in raising money to support Drake's family in return for all he had done for them. The oil men refused, claiming they didn't believe in supporting charity cases. In the end, the citizens of Titusville gave $4,800, which supported their friend for the next four years.

By 1873 he was wheelchair bound and broke again. Oilmen, this time including John Rockefeller, were asked to help and again refused. Finally, out of guilt, the State of Pennsylvania gave Edwin Drake a small annuity for life.

In 1880, the man who gave us the oil age died at 61 years of age. Not one person from the oil industry came to his funeral. Forgotten by the American public, his name vanished from history.

So, why do you know the name Edwin Drake today? Because Standard Oil's trust got into trouble at the turn of the last century, with muckrakers trashing their monopoly of the oil industry.
In 1904, Henry Rogers of Standard had Drake dug up from his grave, put his body into a bronze casket and reburied him in a huge mausoleum in Titusville, with a bronze statue in front, named The Driller.

They finally elevated him to the status of a great American hero, just to take the edge off the bad press Standard was then getting. And the cost? Over $100,000 dollars. Remember, Standard wouldn't pay a penny to him in life.

And that's why today you know the story of Edwin Drake finding oil successfully in Titusville Pennsylvania. A PR move by Standard Oil in 1904.

This wife died in 1919, and she is laid to rest next to her husband. No one from the oil industry attended her funeral, either.

28. Patton's Other Mistake

The year was 1970; protests against the war in Viet Nam were widespread across the country, and into movie theaters came a film glorifying war. It would stand the test of time and become a classic, and it was a war film appreciated by the military and hippies alike. Of course, I'm talking about Patton.

The film was controversial even before filming started. Many actors turned down the lead role, mostly because of the anti-war sentiment in this country at the time. Robert Mitchum was just one of the actors who refused to play Patton.

Of course the very next year, Mitchum also turned down the role of Dirty Harry, claiming that movie would be too fascist. George C. Scott and Clint Eastwood appreciate that.

The movie Patton, as written by Francis Ford Coppola, was a largely accurate depiction of George S. Patton, with two notable exceptions. Patton's voice, in real life, was high-pitched and shrill, not Scott's classically trained Shakespearian baritone. No, in real life Patton sounded more like Wally Cox than George C. Scott.

And the movie left out Patton's biggest mistake of the war. No, not the slapping of the soldier in the hospital. Patton made a much larger mistake, one that should have cost him his career by military court martial.

I went in search of that military blunder for today's story. Instead, I found the real story of Patton's slapping incident.

And as it turns out, he slapped two soldiers, not one. And because of it, the press almost blackmailed Eisenhower into firing Patton and sending him home in disgrace.

The first incident was on July 11, 1943, in Nicosia, Sicily. Patton had just been notified that Eisenhower was awarding him the Distinguished Service Cross for his most recent campaign. Patton went to 15th Evacuation Hospital outside of town to visit with the wounded. That in itself must have been tough enough: looking at young men dead, dying, permanently crippled - young men he had led into battle. To his credit, Patton always made it a point to visit medical posts and sit with the wounded.

However, Patton didn't believe there was any such thing as combat fatigue. He believed in only two things: bravery and cowardice. And there at the 15th Evacuation Hospital, Patton found Sgt. Charles Kuhl, sitting on a bed. When Patton asked him why he was there, the sergeant replied, "I guess I just can't take it." Patton blew up, cursing and yelling for the sergeant to leave the hospital immediately. Kuhl didn't respond. So, Patton grabbed him by his shirt, carried him to the front of the tent and literally kicked him in the backside. Patton wrote in his diary that night, I have met the only arrant coward I have ever seen in this Army.

Then Patton sent a memo to all of his commanders that battle fatigue was not to be cause to admit any soldier into any hospital.

Then came the second incident. August 10th, the 93rd Evacuation Hospital and Private Paul Bennett. Bennett was so unnerved that he had uncontrollable shakes; and when questioned by Patton, Bennett said his nerves just wouldn't take it any longer. Again, Patton blew up, cursing, yelling and claiming Bennett was a simple coward and should be shot. For effect, Patton then slapped the man, pulled his gun out and waved it in his face while continuing his non-stop profanities.

Then Patton turned to leave, looked back at the soldier, still crying from the encounter, ran back and hit the man so hard his helmet flew off.

At that point Colonel Currier, the head physician, placed himself between Patton and the private. Patton left. However, the story of the first slapping had already circulated around the military, and this time the hospital staff decided that enough was enough.

Dr. Currier sent a letter to Eisenhower's chief surgeon, Brigadier General Frederick Blesse. One of the nurses, dating a captain in Public Affairs, told him about the incidents; and in turn he gave the story to Demaree Bess of the Saturday Evening Post, Merrill Mueller of NBC, Al Newman of Newsweek and John Daly of CBS.

And not one reporter filed a story. Instead, the media went to Eisenhower; they promised to bury the

story, on the condition that Eisenhower fire Patton.

Eisenhower was in a trap and he knew it. First, he was furious that Patton had slapped and kicked his men around. That was tempered by the fact that Eisenhower and Patton were friends, having been stationed together back in the twenties.

Eisenhower knew he could court-martial Patton, but tempering that was the knowledge that he needed Patton badly for the invasion of Europe. So, Eisenhower decided to send a letter of reprimand to Patton - and to tell the media they were free to file their stories.

Unlike in the movie, Eisenhower did not demand that Patton apologize to the troops, and guess what? The media didn't file the stories either; that was how much they respected Ike. The reality is, the media believed Patton had gone insane. Ike had only told Patton to apologize to the two soldiers he had slapped; it was Ike's chief surgeon who demanded that Patton apologize to everyone.

When Pvt. Paul Bennett came in front of Patton, he made a mental note to himself that Patton had the face of a man headed for the gallows. But his apology was sincere, and Bennett agreed to shake his hand.

Of course, had Patton known Bennett's full story, he wouldn't have slapped him to begin with. You see, Bennett had served with distinction in II Corps, but he came undone when his best friend was seriously wounded, right next to him. And although he was falling apart, he refused numerous orders to abandon his position. It was only the directive of the battery surgeon that had eventually forced him to the hospital. Bennett hadn't taken himself out of the war, he'd been ordered out.

Sgt. Kuhl also believed Patton's apology was sincere and shook his hand. Kuhl was smarter than most; he said, "I believe the General was also suffering from battle fatigue, or he wouldn't have hit me."

Patton apologized to all the troops under his command. And their responses were varied. The Big Red One simply stood there and didn't move. But then, they'd just come out of 38 days of non-stop combat.

The 9th Infantry Division wouldn't accept his apology; the moment Patton started his speech in front of the 3,000 soldiers they started screaming and yelling his name, refusing to deal with their commander's humiliation. They continuously threw their helmets in the air, a gesture that touched Patton so much that he broke down crying, smiled at his men, saluted them and drove away.

After the story had blown over and the apologies had been made and accepted by the men in question, only then did the media release the story in America.

Yes, there was some controversy and concern, but Patton was a winner and so it blew over.

But it cost Patton dearly. First, Eisenhower had planned to put Patton in charge of all our military units for the attack on mainland Europe. Instead, the bad press forced Ike to promote Omar Bradley over Patton and give him the assignment.

What hurt Patton the most came from General John "Black Jack" Pershing. Pershing had loved Patton, had commanded him as a youngster during his campaign against Pancho Villa in 1916. Pershing had also been in love with Patton's sister, and had commanded him during the First World War. Patton was like a son to Pershing, and Patton thought of Pershing as his real mentor.

And yet, because of the two incidents, Pershing turned completely against Patton, becoming his harshest critic in the States.

Patton wrote to Pershing often during the remainder of the war, trying to explain his position, but Pershing never once responded to Patton's pleas for understanding.

Sadly, the movie Patton summed up this crisis in a little under three minutes of film time. When the entire situation could have been a movie of its own.

Still, Patton made one more mistake in the war, one much more serious error. It's the story no one knows; we'll have that story next week.

It was mid March, 1945, and General George S. Patton was redeeming his reputation with victory after victory in his movement toward Germany.

In fact, Patton's troops had already captured 230,000 German POWs by the first of March; just one week later they had captured another 70,000.

On March 22, Patton stood on the banks of the Rhine River and relieved himself, then bent over to pick up a handful of dirt, held it in the air and screamed, "Thus William the Conqueror!"

Crossing into Germany, he immediately called his commanding officer, Omar Bradley, saying, "Brad, don't tell anyone, but I'm across." Patton didn't want the news spread for fear of a German counterattack.

However, Patton was still Patton; and a few hours later he called Bradley back and reversed his earlier position: yes, let the world know he was in Germany. Apparently, Patton felt he could handle the Germans, but he couldn't stand the thought of British Commander Montgomery's getting the credit for entering Germany first.

The next day, March 23rd, Patton made the worst mistake of his military career - one that should have destroyed it, but another story broke first.

It was that morning that Patton met with other military commanders to decide who should be in charge of which zones from the Rhine eastward. And in that meeting another commander informed Patton of a POW camp just outside Hammelburg, 40 miles in the wrong direction and most certainly behind enemy lines.

Hammelburg had 3,000 Serb prisoners, 800 Americans from the Battle of the Bulge, and 430 Americans from the fighting in Poland. Of course, the quickest way to free those prisoners was to move on to Berlin and win the war; Patton knew that, and initially he dismissed the idea of a raid on the POW camp.

Until he was informed that there might be a Lt. Col. John Waters there.

Waters was Patton's son-in-law. Now, Patton wasn't sure that Waters was in that camp, it was just a rumor; but now he decided those men had to be freed.

The next morning Patton sent his bodyguard, Major Al Stiller, to the headquarters of 4th Armored with instructions for Commander Al Hoge to launch a raid on the Hammelburg POW camp. Hoge had already gotten the same order through the command chain, but he knew how ridiculous this order was and, to his credit, refused to follow it. Hoge relayed his concerns about the mission to his commander, Monton Eddy, who agreed with him. Then Patton showed up, threatened the two men with insubordination if they didn't launch the raid and promised to "replace every man and vehicle that you lose."

Hoge was stunned at how Patton was almost pleading as he gave orders. And yes, Patton admitted that there was a possibility that his son-in-law was in that camp. Hoge knew it was a suicidal mission, but now had no way out.

On the night of the 26th of March, Task Force Baum took off for Hammelburg with 16 tanks, 27 half-tracks and 294 men.

Hoge was praying for a miracle, and for a time it seemed like he was getting one. Because he and his men made it to Hammelburg, liberating 700 Russians at another POW camp on the way. Then came their primary objective, Hammelburg, and the battle was on.

After a fierce battle - in which Patton's son-in-law, seriously wounded with gunshots to the legs and abdomen, was saved by a Serbian doctor - 5,000 POWs were freed.

There were two problems. First, the Germans now knew there was a serious breach of their line by Americans; second, Hoge had only enough vehicles to carry out 250 of the POWs, leaving his entire squadron and 4,750 POWs to fend for themselves.

The POWs, for the most part, had no weapons with which to fight. Then, suddenly, all communications were lost with Task Force Baum.

Yeah, the men might have freed the prisoners and taken the camp, but before they could return to their own lines, they were surrounded by no fewer than three German divisions. A firefight broke out, and all but one of the men would soon be listed as missing in action. All of Task Force Baum had disappeared. Some had been wounded, some killed; most were put back in the POW camp, but Patton didn't know that at the time. He assumed they might all be dead, including his son-in-law.

Patton blamed everyone for the fiasco - Bradley, Hoge, Eisenhower - everyone but himself.

Then on the 27th, Eisenhower's son visited Patton, who admitted what had happened on his orders. Patton broke down and cried when he confessed that he might have gotten his son-in-law killed.

Omar Bradley was furious. Here he was in the middle of a war, one in which the army's reputation was to ensure as best it could the safety of its own men, and Patton had breached that sacred trust. Bradley wrote in his diary, "It was a story that began as a wild goose chase and ended in tragedy."

Of course, no one in the Army was willing to let the press know that this disaster had all come about because Patton was trying to free his son-in-law.

The story still broke in the American press 10 days later and rightfully should have ended Patton's military career, but fate intervened: President Roosevelt had died. As one reporter put it, you could have committed numerous rapes in the street and it wouldn't have shown up before page 4.

Patton's troops later liberated that camp again. His son-in-law survived, and some of Task Force Baum's men were also freed.

Patton later took the POW camp outside of Moosburg; and there, finding his bodyguard, Al Stiller, alive, Patton again wept, this time for joy.

However, Patton knew that only the President's death had saved him from disaster in the eyes of the American public, and he knew the media might not give up this time in demanding his head. So, he assembled the surviving members of the task force and classified the mission Top Secret after the fact, so that the press couldn't get any more details.

Only in 1967, when Creighton Abrams, who had been one of those men on the raid, had become a general himself, did he finally tell the whole story of the day that Patton dismissed the lives of nearly 300 of his men to try and rescue his son-in-law. Abrams pulled no punches either, detailing how Patton had lied about the whole event.

One still can't dismiss Patton as anything less than a great military man, one whose contributions to the war were instrumental in achieving our victory. But all historical figures have some secrets, which shouldn't diminish their greatness but simply prove that even the best often fail. In Patton's case, it only cost his men their lives to save no one.

29. The Fight for the Cure

It had been a scourge of the ages. Its primary victims were our children; it killed thousands and left those who survived incapacitated for life. Today, we don't even think about infantile paralysis or, as it's better known, polio; but those of us 40 and older have in our younger days met people whose lives had been ruined by this virus.

Polio had been around for millennia. We first saw it portrayed in an Egyptian relief dating from 1580 BC, which showed a priest with a withered leg, leaning on his staff and incapable of standing upright. And yet, for 3,496 years, polio was not a worldwide epidemic: A case or two might hit one village, and a few years later a larger number of cases might appear. It's one of the greatest scientific stunners of history that polio became an epidemic only after the turn of the last century - and only then because advances in sanitation had created an environment in which the human body didn't have to deal with the polio virus. We never built up any immunity to the disease.

That's right, polio broke out because modern sanitation gave us a much cleaner world.

There were enough cases in the early days that in 1789, a British physician, Dr. Michael Underwood, published the first clinical descriptions of polio in his work, Debility of the Lower Extremities. Of course, at the time, mankind didn't know about viruses or bacteria, so no one knew how to deal with polio. We simply know that enough people were getting the disease that medicine started researching it.

In 1840, Dr. Jacob von Heine did the first systematic investigation of polio and concluded that it was likely contagious. His simple and mostly ineffective treatments would be copied by others for 60 years.

However, things were quickly coming to a head, for in 1894 the first major outbreak of polio hit the United States. Although the total number of people then infected was small, research on the disease quickly sped up. In 1908, Dr. Ivar Wickman, a pediatrician in Sweden, wrote the first thesis in which he claimed that polio was likely a viral infection, but even then, no one understood why it struck only a few children and adults. Doctors

understood that it was highly contagious; yet, unlike measles, in which one child gets the disease and gives it to everyone else in class, polio seemed to discriminate. And there was no way to tell exactly who was at risk to contract polio.

Still, there wasn't a huge outcry over the issue, for the reasons just stated. Polio might have been contagious, but not contagious enough to make mothers across America worry about their children's welfare.

All that changed in the summer of 1916. A major polio epidemic struck; 6,000 died and more than 27,000 were left crippled, mostly children between the ages of 3 and 10. That's why polio at the time was better known as infantile paralysis. The worst was yet to come, however; after 1916, virtually every summer brought another wave of the disease, killing thousands of young children and disabling tens of thousands more. Often, when the first outbreak was announced in a city, its movie theaters, swimming pools and other public places would empty for months on end; no one wanted infantile paralysis to strike a member of the family.

And no one, no one at all could understand why infantile paralysis had suddenly become the most feared killer of our young children. Particularly when our surroundings, our homes, our city streets, our hygiene were improving so dramatically. The simple fact was, our cleaner world was the exact reason that so many children developed the disease.

Again, our improved environment was the culprit for the summer waves of polio.

As it turns out, polio, infantile paralysis, had always been around; it's just that adults rarely caught the disease. Therefore, a pregnant woman who had been exposed would develop the antibodies to fight off the virus, which she passed on to her unborn child. Once America became so much cleaner, women didn't come in contact with the poliovirus much. Those who did created antibodies, which protected their unborn children; those who didn't gave birth to children susceptible to the disease.

And so, year after year, polio struck. The only advance in saving lives came in 1927 with the invention of the Iron Lung, by Harvard Medical Researcher Philip Drinker. Now those victims whose lungs had been paralyzed no longer died; instead they would spend the rest of their lives inside that huge mechanical beast.

But the face of infantile paralysis was changing. Year after year, more and more adults were catching the disease, including Franklin Roosevelt in 1921. In fact, by the end of the 1930s, half the individuals who had caught polio were now over 10 years of age.

1934 brought a major outbreak in Los Angeles: 2,500 cases hit that city alone. In 1935, Dr. Maurice Brodie and Dr. Kohn Kollmer both claimed to have come up with a vaccine, but in the field tests all they successfully did was infect their subjects - not cure them.

Finally, in 1937, President Franklin D. Roosevelt announced the creation of the National Foundation for Infantile Paralysis. This from Roosevelt's speech. (Insert Audio)

The president had lent his name and birthday to charities, so they could raise money to fund the research needed to cure polio. Roosevelt also correctly deduced that, even in hard times, you could ask someone, anyone, to, as the song said, "spare a dime" to help save the lives of so many.

The nation heard Roosevelt's pleas and we responded, sending in millions of dollars a year for polio research, one dime at a time. The first year's fundraising was so incredibly successful that singer Eddie Cantor, during a 1938 radio broadcast promoting the National Foundation for Infantile Paralysis and describing America's charitable response to the crisis, coined the term "the March of Dimes." That name stuck; in time, "The March of Dimes" would become the official title of the National Foundation for Infantile Paralysis.

Yet, although America continued to respond, polio infections actually went up in the 1940s. It would take two brilliant doctors, both Jewish, one American born and one an immigrant, to finally find a way to end polio's reign of terror on our children.

Jonas Salk was born in 1914 in New York City; in 1942, at just 28 years of age, he was already working at the University of Michigan. Salk conducted a few trial tests with flu vaccine, finding it slightly successful in destroying one strain of polio. He was onto something.

In 1953, now working in Pittsburgh, Salk did trial tests using a vaccine based on destroyed polioviruses. He reported to the National Foundation for Infantile Paralysis that it had worked; and, in 1955, the end of polio was at hand. The only problem with Salk's vaccine was that regular booster shots would be needed.

But, within six years, Dr. Albert Sabin would give us the live oral vaccine. And, polio, the most feared disease in our parents' and grandparents' time, would be gone for our generation.

It didn't happen as quickly as you might think. It was only in 1994 that the International Commission for the Certification of Polio Eradication certified Americans as being 100% polio free.

Strange, when you think about it. The only disease created because we made our world a cleaner place.

Now, let's get back to Roosevelt's campaign to wipe out polio, and Eddie Cantor's line about the March of Dimes. Pull a dime out of your pocket right now and look at Franklin Delano Roosevelt's portrait on it. It was put there in 1946, the year after he died.

No, FDR is not on our dime because of his New Deal. He's not on the dime because of his leadership during the Second World War; and he's not on the dime because of some liberal conspiracy, though some conservatives would like to erase Roosevelt and put Reagan on our 10-cent piece instead. That's the whole problem with our nation today, political nonsense being passed off as history. But, as its vendors know, that stuff can only distort history if you don't have a clue about what really happened.

Roosevelt was put on the dime for one reason only: his non-stop charitable actions on behalf of ending polio, which Cantor called the March of Dimes. And with that dime we honor Roosevelt not for his actions as a president, but for his actions as a humanitarian. What Roosevelt did ended the polio plague in our lifetime.

You don't worry about your children getting polio, about having to care for them for the rest of their lives. In fact, you've probably never thought about it at all, except for that sugar cube you ate in 1st grade that kept you safe.

The millions of dimes our parents, grandparents and great grandparents sent in gave us the cure, through Roosevelt's foundation. And the only memory we have of that national outpouring of goodwill is Roosevelt on our dime.

The discussion was never about being liberal or being conservative, it was about living free or living crippled - if you lived through polio. The March of Dimes worked; we put the man who led the parade on the coin. Look at your children, look at your dime, and ask yourself, do you really want to change that coin now?

30. The Judge Had Freed His Slaves

The Supreme Court decision on Dred Scott's suit, heard in 1857, often is referred to as the final jumping-off point for our Civil War. And, like so many other pieces of our history, this case is widely misunderstood in America - bluntly, it's often taught inaccurately - generation after generation.

Even Ken Burns' incredible documentary on the Civil War didn't quite get it right. Burns used a quote from Supreme Court Chief Justice Roger Taney in his landmark decision, that the Negro had "no rights that a white man was bound to respect." That line was taken completely out of context.

To this day we have often painted Chief Justice Taney as just another Southern racist upholding the rights of slaveholders over their slaves. That portrayal is false in every facet. Only when you know the stories of both Dred Scott and Roger Taney, and you've read the entire Supreme Court decision in this matter, can you understand how Dred Scott's court case became just one more misunderstanding in the history of race relations in America.

Dred Scott was born into slavery somewhere in Virginia and moved with his owners to St. Louis, Missouri, in 1830. He was then sold to an Army doctor, John Emerson. Over the next decade Dr. Emerson took Scott with him to postings at Fort Armstrong in Illinois, Fort Snelling in the Wisconsin Territory, Fort Jessup in Louisiana and back to St. Louis. The important part to know about this is that for seven years, Dred

Scott lived in areas of this country where slavery was prohibited. When Emerson died in 1843, his wife, Irene, inherited Dred Scott along with other property. The widow seems to have treated Scott far worse than her husband had. She not only beat him regularly, but she also leased his services to other families in the St. Louis area.

This part of the story is a key point: Missouri's State Supreme Court had actually freed many slaves in legal decisions over the years — most importantly in 1936, when it freed a slave named Rachael. Their written reasoning was that Rachel's owner had traveled and stayed for extended periods in states that didn't allow slavery. And one of the places Rachel had been taken was Wisconsin's Fort Snelling - where Dred Scott had lived. So, in 1846 Scott had a strong legal case to be freed; his were the exact same circumstances under which the courts had ruled in Rachel's favor 10 years previously.

Let's stop here, therefore, and correct one part of our history: In attempting to win legal freedom from his owners, Dred Scott wasn't doing anything first. Others had tried and done it many, many times in America's courts. So Dred Scott's case broke no new legal ground; he was simply trying to reaffirm precedent, set in previous court cases, to his own benefit.

Roger Taney was born in 1777 in Calvert County, Maryland. His father owned a tobacco plantation; and yes, the family owned a large number of slaves. Taney studied law at Annapolis, became a member of the Maryland House of Representatives and, during this period, said to his fellow representatives that slavery was "a blot on our national character." The sooner the institution of slavery was abolished, Taney believed, the stronger our country would become.

Unlike Washington and Jefferson - who both held strong views about slavery's inhumanity, yet didn't free their own slaves - Taney was a man of integrity. In 1827 he freed every last one of his slaves. As he had stated, Taney hated slavery, and he practiced what he preached.

So, how did this man, who hated the institution of slavery so much that he set his own slaves free, become one of history's poster children for racist behavior? How do we reconcile his innate integrity with what he wrote in the Supreme Court's decision on the Dred Scott case?

He did what he did and wrote what he wrote in the Dred Scott decision because the case was not trying the argument that he should be a free man. The Supreme Court never ruled on that: It ruled on whether he had the right to bring his case into federal court.

Here's the real decision laid out by the Supreme Court. First, there were two types of citizens living here: One might be a citizen of a given state, but you could also be a citizen of the United States. A freed slave might hold all rights of citizenship if the state in which he or she resided was a free state, but the Constitution denied them the national rights of other citizens. Therefore, Dred Scott had no right "to make a federal case out of" his legal complaint.

Making matters worse for Scott was his refusal in court to admit that he was even a citizen of the state of Missouri. The reason was simple: In the 14 years since the Supreme Court of Missouri had freed the slave Rachel, its judicial makeup had grown steadily more conservative. That new Missouri Supreme Court had initially refused, in spite of precedent, to set Dred Scott free.

However, often overlooked in this case is that Scott had already been set free; an Appellate Court, just like the one that had freed Rachel in 1836, had freed him. He had no reason to take it any further; it was Mrs. Irene Emerson, who believed the court had no right to take away her personal property, who appealed the Appellate Court's decision to the Missouri Supreme Court. She's the real villain of this story.

As for Taney's contention that freed slaves were not federal citizens, it is the hardest part of the Dred

Scott decision to read. But it does give you a clear idea of the mindset prevalent in the mid-1800s: The court's decision on who was covered by the Constitution was based on immigration versus importation. Immigrants, they reasoned, came to this country voluntarily, while slaves came against their will. "Voluntarily" means "of one's free will," and therefore invested immigrants with all rights of citizenship. Involuntary meant you were little more than merchandise for sale, and merchandise can't have the rights a citizen does.

Where Taney made his mistake was by not knowing more about American history. He incorrectly concluded that our Founding Fathers were the ones who drew this line in the sand, with the "all men are created equal" stuff in the Declaration of Independence. Taney didn't know that a great debate had raged about the evils of slavery before the Constitution ever reached the first draft stage.

Mistakenly, then, Taney wrote, "They knew that it would not in any part of the civilized world be supposed to embrace the Negro race, and therefore they be doomed to slavery." Notice Taney's sympathy, conveyed in the single word "doomed."

The Dred Scott decision dealt with other issues that are similarly overlooked today. It stated that American Indians had always acted as an independent nation and therefore should be given the rights of immigrants, should they decide to join our society. That's right, the Dred Scott decision not only laid out that freed blacks were due protection under state law, but it also confirmed that American Indians were their own nation. Not that this decision would do the American Indian much good in the coming decades.

The Dred Scott decision would also deny the federal government's right to legislate which territories could or could not have slaves: In doing so, it annulled the Missouri Compromise!

This leads us to what the Dred Scott decision was really all about. It had nothing to do with slavery; it was about States' rights versus those of the federal government. It said the federal government had no right to legislate how States dealt with slavery. It also said the federal government could not withhold citizenship from American Indians, and it said freed slaves could be citizens of a state and would be protected by that state's laws.

It also denied that the Supreme Court, a federal court, had any jurisdiction in the case, thereby limiting its own powers. Again, this decision reaffirmed States' rights to hold the federal government in check.

Abraham Lincoln took the Dred Scott decision as a slap in the face. Lincoln claimed that the federal government did have the right to force certain states to be slave free. By the same token, he believed, the feds had the right to "let" states hold slaves.

Today we consider Lincoln's attitude an anti-slavery campaign. In reality, Lincoln was simply looking to expand federal powers, using slavery as the wedge.

Within a few years the Civil War would rage. Lincoln would issue the Emancipation Proclamation - which, far from freeing anyone, actually excluded the freeing of slaves in the South, in counties controlled by the Union Army. Instead of being a humanitarian gesture, it was one of authority: It was Lincoln's way of telling the South, "Surrender, and you can keep your slaves."

Chief Justice Roger Taney, a son of the South, stayed with the Union during the war. He wouldn't stand with the South, as he didn't believe in the Cause. Today we consider him the most racist jurist the Supreme Court ever benched; in fact, however, he detested slavery. He had freed his own slaves 30 years before the Dred Scott decision. Taney died in 1864, his heart broken by the Civil War's many tragedies.

Now the part of the case most people don't know. Right after the Supreme Court ruled to her benefit, Irene Emerson remarried. Her new husband was violently opposed to slavery. So, the former Mrs. Irene Emerson simply gave Dred Scott and his wife back to the Blows, who had sold Scott to them 27 years earlier. The Blows, in turn, finally did what no court would do: They gave Dred Scott and his wife their freedom.

Scott died a free man the very next year, of tuberculosis. He was buried in Wesleyan Cemetery, but even there he wouldn't rest. For that cemetery was closed two years after the Civil War; Dred Scott was reburied in Calvary Cemetery, in an unmarked grave, and for nearly a century American history mostly forgot about him.

Then, in 1957, a group of researchers found Dred Scott's grave. They put up a gravestone, and now finally, everyone can see the role he played in our history. The marker reads, "Dred Scott, born sometime around 1799, died September 17th, 1858. Dred Scott subject of the decision of the Supreme Court of the

United States in 1857. Which denied citizenship to the Negro, voided the Missouri Compromise Act, became one of the events that resulted in the Civil War."
They left off one thing: Dred Scott died a free man.

31. Who Ran Our Military in the War of 1812?

Maybe you've never thought this one through, but if I asked you who commanded our military forces in the Revolutionary War, you would immediately say George Washington. Our Civil War? That would be Grant and Lee. The First World War was led by John J. Pershing and the Second World War by Dwight Eisenhower. And most of us know that General Westmoreland commanded Vietnam and Norman Schwarzkopf was our man in Desert Storm.

So, if I asked you to name our top military leader in the War of 1812, what would you answer? The fact is, every school kid in the 1800s knew that one - but today, our history refuses even to whisper the name of General James Wilkinson.

Why is that? It's a good reason: He made Benedict Arnold look like a choirboy and made fools of almost every one else who believed in him.

James Wilkinson had been born in Calvert County, Maryland, in 1757, to the family of a prosperous, well-respected merchant and farmer, Joseph Wilkinson. And James, who was quite the clever young lad, was already well educated and studying at medical school, in Philadelphia in 1776, when the call of the Revolution overtook his desire to practice medicine. He was commissioned a Captain that same year, fought alongside Benedict Arnold for a short period, then with General Horatio Gates. At this point in his life, James Wilkinson must have been at least a competent officer, for he was brevetted a general during the Revolutionary War.
However, the very next year, 1777, Wilkinson found himself in with the group trying to oust George Washington as commander of our military forces, known as the Conway Cabal. Obviously, they failed to do so. And now, since he'd been outed as a co-conspirator, Wilkinson was forced to resign his commission. Well, he later reenlisted, and he was welcomed back - but he hadn't come back to fight, he'd come back to steal. Yes, Wilkinson managed to get himself appointed our Clothier-General, for the sole purpose of enriching himself off the nation's demands for war materiel. Kickbacks became the rule of the day and - even when his corruption became public knowledge - not much came of Washington's suspicions.

In 1783, Wilkinson moved to the Kentucky territory, where he continued to double-deal our new nation and its citizens. At the time, the western frontier pretty much ended at the Mississippi, with both English and Spanish rule covering points north and west. For his part, Wilkinson became politically involved in the movement to grant Kentucky statehood and remove it from Virginia's rule.

There was a small problem of funding. Kentucky wasn't very rich at the time because it was blocked from increasing commerce; one had to use the Ohio and Mississippi Rivers to get goods to market, and those rivers were controlled by the Spanish government in New Orleans. And Spain did not want Americans using their waterway, most of all because they feared our movement west.

But that wasn't a problem for Wilkinson. He simply sailed down to New Orleans and turned against our country -becoming an agent for the Spanish Empire for $2,000 a year. He also quietly negotiated a concession from Spain, giving him monopolistic control over all goods shipped on the Mississippi. Of course, he did all this without telling his friends back in Kentucky, or our politicians in Washington, what he had done. Additionally, he never mentioned that he'd used Americans as a threat: He warned that our western settlers could get so upset with Washington that they'd move back under the umbrella of the British Empire, just so he could scare the Spanish into granting him illegal control of Mississippi shipping.

His ultimate betrayal, in 1787, was when Wilkinson swore allegiance to the Spanish Crown. These lines are from that document: "Born and educated in America, I embraced its cause in the last revolution and remained throughout faithful to its interest. Now rendered by services useless, discharged of my pledge, dissolved of my obligations, even those of nature, and left at liberty, after having fought for her happiness, to seek my own circumstances, I am resolved to seek it in Spain." He added in another correspondence when he was secretly appointed the Spanish agent for Kentucky, this line, "I will be able to alienate the Western

Americans from the United States, destroy the insidious designs of Great Britain and throw those Americans into the arms of Spain."

Congress at the time had refused Kentucky's entry into the U.S. as a state. So, when he returned home, his fellow Kentuckians cheered Wilkinson for opening commerce with New Orleans. They didn't realize he had joined our enemy and was being paid for every shipment of goods Kentucky shipped south.

General Wilkinson had double-dealt America and the people of Kentucky for his own selfish desires - but his treachery didn't stop there. In 1805, Aaron Burr met with Wilkinson in St. Louis to plot the overthrow of the Spanish government, after which they would establish a new nation in the South Central U.S.

As our government had no idea that Wilkinson was a Spanish agent and stealing from his neighbors, by this point he had not only been given the command of our military forces in the region, but he was also our governor for the Louisiana Territory. Yet Wilkinson agreed to Burr's plan quickly. Burr would return east and raise funds and an army, then meet with Wilkinson with his army in Natchez, Mississippi, where the two would move to New Orleans and declare a new nation. On August 6th, 1806, Wilkinson wrote Burr that his plans were in motion, but then realized the secret was out.

Immediately, he turned on Burr, writing Thomas Jefferson on October 21st of Burr's plot against America. Jefferson asked General Crowles Mead for his advice on the matter; the General, knowing something of Wilkinson's nature, told Jefferson that he believed in his heart and soul that Wilkinson was the primary mover in the conspiracy. But, with no way out, Jefferson gave Wilkinson the benefit of the doubt, ordering him to New Orleans to defend the city and stop Aaron Burr's plan of action.

But Wilkinson didn't defend the city, he seized it. Then he declared martial law and had his troops loot homes and businesses; he fired the city's officials and ordered that anyone who disobeyed him was to be jailed. Hundreds were arrested, millions of dollars were stolen, and anyone who sued was arrested, as was any judge who dared accept those cases. General Andrew Jackson knew the score and wrote the governor of the state about his fellow officer, "Be upon the alert. Keep a watchful eye on our general. I fear there is something rotten in Denmark."

And so General James Wilkinson, who double-dealt George Washington, our new government, the people of Kentucky, the Spanish government, Aaron Burr, Thomas Jefferson and the people of New Orleans, all to enrich himself personally, got off Scot free. That's right, absolutely nothing happened to him, because no one could prove anything of substance - if they could, they were already in jail, in New Orleans. Therefore, he kept getting promoted.

When the War of 1812 started, James Wilkinson was our nation's highest-ranking military officer, responsible for the successful prosecution of the war with England. Only now, his selfishness and incompetence became apparent. It happened at Lacolle Mill, Canada, in 1813.

Wilkinson was leading 4,000 American soldiers against just 200 British regulars; and it was the most infamous battle lost in our history. Those 200 Brits forced Wilkinson's men into retreat. Only then was he relieved of his command.

This time around, there would be a court martial for Wilkinson. Charges were brought against him of corruption, suspected dealings with Spain, illegal actions during the holding of New Orleans, and incompetence in stopping the British advance out of Canada while commanding the far superior force. And General James Wilkinson was quickly acquitted of all charges. The suspicions at the time were that the court was forced to acquit him, lest his corruption bring up potential accomplices in our government.

So, having stolen from everyone for decades, his personal fortune intact and immense, Wilkinson retired to Mexico. Safe from further prosecution, he lived there as a very wealthy man. As for the War of 1812, it would be the American militia, not our regular army, that saved the day.

It's hard to say what motivates a person with absolutely no conscience, no moral integrity. Harder still to admit how one person could do so much to destroy what America was trying to become in her early days. Nevertheless, it's simply incredible that someone who was concerned only with satisfying his own greed rose to such a high position of power, meanwhile throwing others to the wolves, managed to get away with all this.

In fact, General James Wilkinson's enormities were so vast that it's no wonder his name has totally been wiped off of every page in American history, as if he never existed. Then again, that's why to this day you've never heard of the General who commanded our forces in the War of 1812, although you can name our military leaders in every other war we've been in.

There is one last footnote to this story. He was acquitted at his court martial in 1814 because much of the evidence introduced at his trial was considered hearsay. It took our War Against Spain in 1898 to finally uncover the entire truth. That's when our government archivists came into possession of some of Spain's papers from that period; they discovered that James Wilkinson had in fact been a Spanish agent, had held a monopoly on trade on the Mississippi, and had sworn allegiance to the Spanish Crown. Only then, with the proof staring us in the face, was his name stricken forever from our history books.

Well, now you know who was in charge of our army during the War of 1812. Just don't mention his name in polite company - and never in Kentucky.

32. America's Unknown Depression

Future historians will look back on this period of America's history as possibly one of the most unique times the public has ever survived. It started with a Republican president and 20 years of legislation, which had consistently favored large corporations to the detriment of smaller companies and the average person. It was a period of major consolidation in industry, oil companies buying other oil companies, transportation industries buying the less fortunate. Even though they were remembered as good times financially, many companies struggled to make a profit in those years, constantly downsizing. But their executives didn't care; they cared only about the price of their company's stock - which was where they derived the vast majority of their annual compensation.

But while a few such industry captains got rich in this period, increasing numbers of Americans were sliding below the poverty line. Farmers were in trouble, and no one in Washington seemed to care. Finally, a constant topic of discussion became stemming the flood of immigrants into this country; the fear that we would lose control of our sovereignty became widespread.

No, I'm not talking about today. I'm talking about the events that led up to one of the worst depressions in American history, known as the Panic of 1893.

Now, if I asked you to describe the 1890s in a sentence, most people would refer to that period as the Gay Nineties. But, that's the power of Hollywood talking: Things couldn't have been less gay. The 1890s were one of the most desperate times in our history, one of the lowest points for mankind our country has ever endured.

Today we think of the period after the Civil War as one of the stronger times for immigration and growth in America. We remember the words at the bottom of the Statue of Liberty, "Give me your tired, your poor, your huddled masses yearning to breathe free. The wretched refuse of your teeming shore." Here's what we could have added: "and we'll make them our hungry, poor and wretched refuse." Because that's exactly what we did.

American industry before 1893 was dominated by railroads, packing plants, steel industries and the like. However, for the laborer or industrial worker, more often than not a recent immigrant, wages were so low that even working a 96-hour week, a man couldn't afford a place to live and food to feed his family. It's true: Streetcar drivers in New York City earned $12 for working 16-hour days, six days a week. When they attempted to lobby for a mere 12-hour day, none other than Teddy Roosevelt, then a New York Assemblyman, branded them Communists.

Living quarters for the poor were squalid tenement apartments. Typically 12-by-12 rooms, they had no windows, no bathrooms, no fresh air ventilation. Many tenements were firetraps; it was common for one to burn down, killing all its residents. Moreover, laws had been enacted that protected the tenement buildings' owners to the absolute exclusion of individual renters' rights. This was a lucrative business: One of the biggest tenement landlords in New York, the Vanderbilt family, amassed much of its wealth from preying on the poor.

Toward the 1890s farmers, which comprised most of our citizens, found themselves earning less money than it took to grow their crops. A farm crisis; sound familiar?
No, unless you were a Vanderbilt, an Astor, a Huntington, Rockefeller, or Carnegie, life in America wasn't that great as the century drew to a close. It was about to get much worse.

Railroads are the symbol of our nation's might in the period just before the Panic of 1893. Yet, because of their rapid expansion, they often made little money; owners preferred to make their millions by manipulating their stocks' prices.

America was on the gold standard, with $190 million in bullion for reserves. However, silver mining interests in the West had managed to get legislation passed contracting our government to buy all the silver they produced. In effect, our currency should have been backed by both gold and silver, but it wasn't - and things were about to go very wrong.

It probably started in 1890. That's when the Barring Brothers investment banking firm in London, the major underwriter of our own Atchison Topeka, and Santa Fe railroad, collapsed financially. Panic started setting in.

Three years later, on May 4th, 1893, National Cordage, our largest maker of rope, suddenly folded. As America sat stunned, unable to believe that had happened, suddenly European countries started a run on our gold reserves, refusing to accept treasury bonds. Then the price of silver collapsed, making it impossible to back our currency with it.

Once the bad news hit there were runs on our banks; 128 closed in June of 1893 alone. At the end of that July, the Erie Railroad failed. In all, during 1893 15,000 companies collapsed, more than 500 banks closed, and 30% of our railroads, including the Santa Fe and the Union Pacific, became insolvent.
Still sound like the nineties were gay?

Within two years we had less than $61 million in gold reserves. Our farmers were forced to burn their own corn to stay warm in the winters, because no produce buyer had the money to buy the crops. Unable to care for their children, destitute parents abandoned them; in Detroit alone it was estimated that thousands of abandoned children walked the streets begging for food and shelter.

Wages already below the poverty line were cut dramatically. And when workers struck, as in the Pullman Strike, the National Guard would be called out to protect the industrialists. Violence toward workers by our government included killing individuals who were just asking for a living wage. Labor riots would mark the next four years.

Right here in Dallas our population actually fell during that period. Some local banks failed, and our flour and lumber industries all but disappeared.

One historian wrote that it is easy to spot photographs from this period; the average Americans in them are hungry, walking skeletons, with deeply sunken eyes. It was nothing less than the near total collapse of our economic system.

The Populist movement formed, primarily of farmers. Desperate to raise the prices of their farm produce, they lobbied to get our currency insured with both silver and gold, but to no avail.
Evictions of the poor in New York were so frequent that one court averaged 150 cases a day. No one who lived through this time in America would ever forget it: Everyone suffered.

By 1898 the depression was coming to an end, finished off by our entry into the Spanish American War. But now you know why Henry Ford wanted to save the farmers, why he thought that by giving his car to the masses he could make their lives better. For Ford created the Model T just 10 years after the end of The Panic of 1983. And now you know why his creation of a new middle class of laborers, beginning with his five-dollar day, was a watershed event in this country, as was the 40-hour workweek he instituted in 1927.

Yes, the financial panic of 1893 marked the end of the Gilded Age in America. It was also the pivotal point at which we went from being a nation that built for industry to becoming one that would ultimately be driven by consumers. So how come you never heard of this calamity? Why did you grow up thinking that the Great Depression is the only one America had suffered? You may not have learned about it in school, but you've seen the movie; every parent gets the children to watch it. You just didn't realize that the movie represented America in the Financial Panic of 1893.

L. Frank Baum was a failure at many things. In the late 1880s he lived in Aberdeen, South Dakota; he owned a general store and a newspaper there that failed. But he was in the perfect position to understand the farmers' plight, and to see with his own eyes how strongly they believed that they were being held hostage by the rail owners and Eastern banking syndicates.

Moving to Chicago, Baum was a reporter during this Depression; and in 1900 he published his political and symbolic parable, a roman á clef about the Financial Panic of 1893: The Wonderful Wizard of Oz. Here's the key to the cast of characters: Dorothy represents the Average American. The tornado is the Depression of 1893, destroying everything in its path and ripping apart families.

Dorothy drops into the Land of the Munchkins, who represent common labor; small and insignificant, they're enslaved by the Wicked Witch of the East - the Eastern industrialists. Dorothy sets labor free by killing the industrialist witch. But she wants to go back to her home, over the rainbow - signifying the real promise of America.

In the movie she's given ruby slippers - but in the book they are made of silver. And she follows a yellow brick road; those two symbols stood for the farmers' conviction that using both gold and silver would put us on the path back to prosperity.

The Good Witch of the North is the progressive voters of the Northern states. The Scarecrow represents the farmers; the average person believed they had no brains, but L. Frank Baum knew that they were in fact fairly clever.

The Tin Man is America's industrial workers. Incapable of taking care of himself, he can't even oil his own joints.

The Lion, who fears combat but is fearless when challenged, is Populist candidate William Jennings Bryan. And the Wizard of Oz is the president of the United States, a fraud who deceives people; he tells Dorothy to kill the Wicked Witch of the West - land and mortgage bankers.

So she does that, and the Good Witch of the South - not shown in the movie, but representing in the book the South's progressive voters - tells Dorothy, the American people, that she can always go home by clicking her silver heels. Meaning that if they'd used the silver for currency reserves, then things would have stayed just fine.

That's right, The Wizard of Oz is a political parable. It envisions killing the industrialists, who held laborers hostage, and bankers, who owned farm mortgages. It showed the president as a man who first deceived everyone, then set the workers free. And finally, the Progressive voters in the North and South, shown as the good witches, let us know that if America would follow the gold road, and click our silver heels, we would again become a nation of liberty, equality and wealth for all.

You may never have known how tragic the 1890s were in America. You may not have learned that a depression happened then, or that it destroyed so many families. But you'll never be able to watch The Wizard of Oz again without being reminded of it.

33. Helen Keller; Radical Socialist

As a child I used to take my allowance to the Ridglea Theater on Camp Bowie and watch movies. Although I was only nine years old in 1962, I was fascinated by the film, The Miracle Worker, the story of Helen Keller. And although I haven't seen it again in the 39 years since then, some of its images remain with me still. Patty Duke as young Helen, throwing things in a tantrum at the dining table; Annie Sullivan putting Helen's hand under the pump and teaching her the word for water.

Of course, I'm not alone in admiring how Helen Keller first overcame her handicaps in life. I just never knew what she did after that. So I went searching for the real Helen Keller.

Born in 1880, Helen was the daughter of a former Confederate Officer turned newspaper editor. Though she was born quite healthy, a bout of scarlet fever at 19 months of age nearly killed her. She survived, but the fever left baby Helen deaf, dumb and blind.

Her father wrote to ask Alexander Graham Bell for help. Bell, in turn, contacted friends at Boston's Perkins Institute for the Blind. They sent their best pupil, Annie Sullivan, to Helen, and you know the story from there. With maybe one exception: It wasn't the moviemakers who gave Annie Sullivan the title of the Miracle Worker, it was Mark Twain.

That's the story you know, the one made into countless movies. Girl loses three senses, girl helps girl, girl overcomes handicaps and learns to speak, read and write. By the way, Helen Keller even graduated from Radcliffe College, in 1904.

Now here's my question for you: What did Helen Keller do between her graduation from Radcliffe in 1904 and her death in 1968? After all, this incredible woman overcame every obstacle life had thrown in her path. So, what's the lesson in this story, if she didn't go on to accomplish something really important? If she was strong enough to survive her ordeals, but then did nothing else in her life with that force of mind, doesn't that make her struggle insignificant?

Okay, maybe you know that Helen Keller gave lectures. She did. Maybe you know that she wrote books. Did that, too. Now, what did she speak and write about? Well, here's how a typical bio of Helen Keller reads, "She championed women's rights, fought for the cause of workers and equality for minorities." This from another bio, "she spoke out against things such as child labor and capital punishment."

Good God, it only gets better, kids. A woman overcomes tremendous obstacles, then uses her new talents to champion the causes of underdogs. Makes you wonder why she had that FBI file, doesn't it?

That's the problem with the way we tell our American history. It's so darn innocuous and ... sanitized.

Let me give you a little list of Helen Keller's writings and speeches. 1912, How I Became a Socialist; 1914, Brutal Treatment of the Unemployed; 1915, the Menace of Our Military; 1916, Strike Against the Great War; and the same year, Why I Became a member of the International Workers of the World. 1919, End the Blockade of Soviet Russia; 1921, Help Soviet Russia; 1929, The Spirit of Lenin.

That's right, Helen Keller as an adult was a revolutionary Socialist and, according to J. Edgar Hoover, a Communist, to boot. Let me quote to you from an article Keller wrote in 1912, titled "How I Became a Socialist." "The first book I read was Wells' New World for Old." By the way, Annie Sullivan gave her that book. Again from that article, "I am no worshipper of cloth of any color, but I love the red flag and what it symbolizes to me and other Socialists. I have a red flag hanging in my study." She also uses the term "comrades" in that writing to describe her close friends.

In 1916 she gave a speech at Carnegie Hall, called Strike Against the War. Some excerpts. "We are facing a grave crisis in our national life. The few who profit from the labor of the masses want to organize those workers into an army which will protect the only the interests of the capitalists." I wonder why they left that out of the movie. She went on to say, "Congress is not preparing to defend the people of the United States. It is only planning to protect the capital of American speculators and investors. Every modern war has had its root in exploitation. And your vote will not make a free man out of a wage slave."

Of course, Helen Keller said and did all that when she was just a mere Socialist. In 1916 she joined the International Workers of the World, a group which made Socialism look nearly right-wing Republican. In an

interview with Barbara Bindley, published in the New York Tribune on January 16th, 1916, Helen talked about her political shift to the extreme far left, admitting that she was a disciple of Karl Marx's Communist Manifesto. Quoting her, from that interview: "I became an IWW because I found out that the Socialist party was too slow." Bindley asks, "What are you committed to, education or revolution?" Keller replies, "Revolution. We have tried peace education for 1,900 years, and it has failed. Let us try revolution and see what it will do now."

In 1921 she wrote, "I love Russia and all who stand loyally by her in her mighty wrestlings with the giant powers of ignorance and imperialist greed. Oh, why cannot the workers see that the cause of Russia is their cause?"

In her book, Midstream, My Later Life, published in 1929, Keller writes, "I see the furrow Lenin left sown with the unshatterable seed of a new life for mankind." She goes on, "...a new star has risen in the East, it is Russia and it will warm the world."

Now let's be fair. During Helen Keller's early life, working in America didn't give the average person the life of Riley. A job meant a 60-hour week, and most paid wages too low to support a family. The workplace was dangerous; but if you were hurt, no disability pay kicked in. Retirement plans, even Social Security hadn't been thought of. Many struggling people, therefore, found it easy to believe in the concept of a worker's paradise in Russia. Ronald Reagan was even taken in, but the Communist Party turned down his application for membership; they considered him a flake.

Helen Keller didn't quit talking or writing about Socialist and Communist issues. Finally, in 1943, the FBI opened a file on her. They couldn't tell whether she was a Communist, a Nazi, or a Fascist, but by FBI standards they knew she was something really rotten.

Helen Keller passed away in 1968. Today she's idolized by millions, and her courage in overcoming her handicaps is an inspiration to us all. But, by not teaching them anything about Helen Keller's life after she overcame those tremendous hurdles, we're telling our children that her later life was without meaning, and that's not true.

You see, those ideals she talked about in her radical days are reality today: Better wages, better working conditions, the end of child labor, women's suffrage, help for the handicapped, and retirement benefits. They seemed radical at the time, but now they're planks in any good Republican's campaign platform. Yet, in her time, she was considered a dangerous radical — and we can't teach kids in our schools to admire that, now can we?

You never knew she was a radical. You didn't know her political beliefs; you didn't know she helped found the American Civil Liberties Union, or that she gave money to help the NAACP in the twenties. You're just like me, still mentally picturing Patty Duke with her hand in the stream of pump water, having the word spelled out in her hand by Anne Bancroft's fingers. Past that, history has cleaned the slate of what she did — but we don't have to remain ignorant.

Helen Keller called the nation to a worker's revolution. She pitched a battle, in print, in speech and in the streets, against the evils of Capitalism.

I'll leave today's story with two of Helen Keller's sayings, one humorous and one brilliant.

"I think God made woman foolish so that she might be a suitable companion for a man."

And my personal favorite: "People do not like to think. For if one thinks, one must reach conclusions. And conclusions are not always pleasant."

America's most cherished radical and Communist, Helen Keller.

34. Drugs in America

Today you can barely turn on a television or radio without another story involving America's war against alcohol abuse and drugs. Moreover, we are led to believe that those two problems in this country have never reached the epidemic proportions of just this past decade. However, while we certainly aren't condoning America's vices, we must point out a sad fact of history: Our citizenry has had problems with drugs and alcohol virtually since we got here.

Let's start off with the Pilgrims, whose liquid refreshment of choice was beer. They believed that their homemade brew was safer to drink than this country's water supply - which may have been true. Remember, until Louis Pasteur discovered bacteria as a major source of human illness, no one knew that allowing raw sewage to drain into local streams would in time make them toxic. Many Americans, from the Massachusetts Bay Colonists to prairie farmers with outhouses, accidentally poisoned their own water supplies through sheer ignorance. So beer, having been brewed, was in fact safer than water with unknown properties.

We sure drank like it came out of the kitchen faucet. By the 1820s, our government estimated that America drank enough alcohol annually to supply every man, woman and child with five gallons of the stuff. That's right: By 1820, America was No. 1 internationally in the consumption of distilled spirits. Today, we consume only about half that amount per person.

Now to be fair, for the vast majority of Americans life was more the pits than a bowl of cherries. For most people life was nothing but hard work, with little to entertain you after hours. So the old clichè of drinking to forget your problems, probably truer then than now, has been used and passed on, generation after generation.

Although the use of intoxicants and stimulants has been a problem since biblical times, our modern war on drugs had its start a mere 159 years ago. In this particular war, the government was fighting to get more people to buy drugs.

Like so many other conflicts, this tragic tale had its roots in international foreign trade - particularly, in one country's trade deficit. As early as 1773, Britain was illegally selling the Chinese opium smuggled into that country. By 1836 the amount of opium Britain was selling off the books had ballooned to over eight million pounds.

Now, the British East India Company had the license for import and export from both China and India. And, as you know, the British consider their afternoon tea an indispensable part of life. But Britons' tea came from China, and in quantities so great that England's trade imbalance with that country threatened the British economy. So the British East India Company started openly shipping opium from its poppy fields in India directly into China.

Of course, the Chinese government didn't want England turning the country of Confucius into a bunch of useless drug addicts. The next thing you know, along came the British Opium War of 1842.

By now you're wondering what in the world this has to do with the Backside of American History. Well, the British weren't the only ones selling opium to the Chinese. Many of our more illustrious New England merchants were in on the trade, too. It's true: Much of America's prosperity came from dealing drugs to the world. Unlike the British, who owned poppy fields in India, our New England ancestors held poppy fields in Turkey. Now you know how the Turks got into the business.

However, while the British were fighting the Opium Wars, companies like the Russell Trust Group, headed by Warren Delano, used that period to expand their trade in opium with the Chinese, effectively breaking the British monopoly. In fact, one British trader, upset about what the war was costing Britain, complained about the Russell Trust Company's muscling in on the action: "While we hold the horns, the Americans milk the cow."

Just like they do today, religious groups did what they could to stop drug use. Missionaries in China protested opium importation directly to Warren Delano. He wrote in reply, "I do not pretend to justify the prosecution of the opium trade in a moral and philanthropic point of view, but as a merchant I insist it has been

a fair, honorable, and legitimate trade; and to say the worst of it, liable to no further or weightier objections than is the importation or wines, Brandies, and spirits into the United States or England."

We should point out that the Delano family fortune came primarily from the business of dealing drugs. That's only important for you to know because Warren Delano's daughter Sara married James Roosevelt; and their son, one of our more revered presidents, was Franklin Delano Roosevelt - who always refused to discuss the origins of his family's fortune. Bet you didn't see that coming.

Of course, we had our addicts here, too, primarily the walking wounded from our Civil War. Given opiates to control their pain, they survived the war but ended up lifelong addicts.

We got our children started on drugs young back then, too. The No. 1 selling cough syrup for both children and adults in the period 1870 to 1890 contained laudanum, or liquefied opium.

Furthermore, in 1899, Americans were thrilled when the Bayer Company finally announced its cure for the common cold. This wonderful panacea would be sold across the counter under its patented name, Heroin.

Acknowledging that a serious drug problem existed in America, our government passed legislation against drugs in 1909. Nevertheless, importing opium was still legal until 1914; heroin was legally brought into the country until 1924. Still, federal legislation seems to have been as ineffective then as it often is today; on the eve of the First World War, one government study estimated that the U.S. had one million opium addicts.

I don't think I need to tell you that cocaine, often used to cure sore throats and headaches, was so common that Sears Roebuck sold it by the pound by mail order.

Marijuana, considered a problem in the thirties, had become a downright social disaster by the end of the Second World War. Bergen Evans wrote in 1946 that at least half of the nation's magazine editors were addicted to pot. Or at least the ones that he'd met.

You conspiracy buffs recognize the stories about the drug trade being run by our own government, including growing poppy fields in Southeast Asia and shipping it around by Air America during the Viet Nam war. There is some truth to this story, but it's French in nature. Seems that in the early fifties the French in fact funded a great deal of their war in Viet Nam by shipping opium and processed heroin back to France. And it was officially sanctioned by their government, not only to fund the war, but as a way to incapacitate France's noisy lower class. Let's face it, people out of touch with reality don't care much about political affairs. They don't complain - and they don't vote.

Now, let's knock out a few myths about drugs in America. First, the one about cocaine in Coke. While it's true that the company has always distilled coca leaves for the product, government investigators couldn't find one trace of it in Coca Cola in 1903 - long before federal legislation made it illegal.

And everyone forgets the original magic ingredient in 7-Up: Lithium, used to control manic-depressive personalities. I guess that's the reason for 7-Up's original slogan: "You like it, it likes you." Now, if you doubt that, remember that when 7-Up hit the market in 1929, its original name was Bib-Label Lithiated Lemon Lime Soda. Of course it was quickly changed to 7-Up, Lithiated Lemon Lime. Realizing that that was another marketing mistake, the makers changed the name to plain 7-Up. The company finally took the lithium out of the product after the Second World War. What a downer.

Today we struggle with the social and economic effects of alcohol and drug abuse. But, because we honestly believe that this problem has only achieved epidemic proportions in the past couple of decades, we look for what's changed in our society in the past 20 years and brought

this plague upon our house. Psychologists and bureaucrats alike debate what makes today's kids so inclined to indulge in so many socially unacceptable practices. Is it parents too busy for their kids, or addicted themselves? Is it that no boundaries have been set for children who daily face peer pressure, boredom with their lives, boredom with not learning anything in school? Is it that awful "devil music"?

All of those causes sound plausible. But blaming today's addiction problems on them doesn't explain why the exact same problems existed 50, 100, or 150 years ago in this country - long before Marilyn Manson and Eminem. No one brings up, much less teaches about, our long history of problems in this area of personal abuse. But that may be what's needed: It's just possible that acknowledging our nation's history of drug and alcohol abuse will be the key to understanding and permanently curing our present problems. Maybe we should be trying to figure out why so many Americans of our past have been addictive personalities.

35. Why Canada Did Not Get Alaska

Looking back on the Civil War, most of us think about the great and horrendous land battles, such as Bull Run or Antietam, Gettysburg or Sherman's march to the sea. But, with the exception of Rhett Butler's admission of being a blockade-runner in the movie Gone With the Wind, about the only thing we're taught of maritime warfare is about the battle between the Monitor and the Merrimac, both ironclad ships. And even in that case, those sea battles were fought close to shore.

However, most Americans don't realize that our Civil War was fought around the world, or that when it finally drew to a conclusion, we would end up suing other countries for their active participation in our personal, private fight.

Now, most understand that shortly after the start of hostilities, the Union Navy established a blockade around most of the important Southern ports. The idea was that this would block the sale of Confederate cotton overseas, denying the South the funds to purchase consumer goods, medicines and of course, lots of war materiel. But, at the outbreak of the war, the nation's Navy had just a few dozen vessels - not enough to even fight the war, much less fight and blockade the South. So the Union Navy commandeered 600 vessels from our Merchant Marine fleet.

This is interesting: Legally, America believed in the right of the open seas policy, which is fundamentally what we fought the War of 1812 for. But, no matter: In the Civil War, our hard-won standard for the recognition of international waters was thrown out the window.

The South, just to even things out, commissioned warships to raid Northern shipping, and here is where it gets really interesting. Two of the most successful Southern raiders were the Florida and the Shenandoah; however, it wasn't our own Southern gentlemen, now in uniform, who commanded or even crewed those ships. No, for the most part, the Confederacy was more than happy to make do with British sailors, who were thrilled with the chance for higher wages and promises of rich rewards if the South won the war.

In July of 1862, the powerful warship the 290, renamed the Enrica, sailed down England's Mersey River, having left Liverpool on its first trial run at sea. At least, that was the public announcement: Once in open waters, the ship sailed to a predetermined point just off the Azores, where it was boarded by Confederate Admiral Raphael Semmes. It also took on English supplied arms, provisions and coal and a new name: Confederate States Ship Alabama.

Admiral Semmes took the Civil War to the Union Navy and commercial ships, from New York to Java, capturing or sinking no fewer than 82 Union vessels between 1862 and 1864.

In fact, British-built ships like the Alabama were so successful worldwide that the Union was forced to reflag many of our Merchant Marine ships as foreign vessels to keep them out of harm's way. That also hurt the Union cause in the long run; once the war was over, those reflagged vessels could not be returned to United States registry.

Now, again, the Alabama had already done in 82 Union ships, but it didn't meet its end off the coast of North America. No, in 1864, right there in the English Channel, the Alabama met up with the ironclad

Union ship, the Kearsarge. After a 90-minute battle, Semmes surrendered the Alabama to the Union Navy and returned to the South.

The point being made, how many of you knew that Civil War battles were fought worldwide, much less that one took place in the English Channel?

Which brings up the next point, the serious problem between the United States and England over their building these ships for the Confederacy.

It was dealt with by no less than the Assistant Secretary of the Union Navy, Fox. Finally, during the Alabama's worldwide reign of terror, Fox ordered the Union Navy to stop at all hazards the Laird ram ships coming out of England.

Now, that in itself would be a violation of international commerce. But the administration felt that England would dread any possibility of a war with the States. So an aide was dispatched to England bearing the message that "Any further fitting out of ships for the Confederacy would complicate the relations between the two countries in such a manner as to render it difficult to preserve friendship between the two countries." The threat was unmistakable: Any more ships, and it's war.

Making matters worse, our Congress passed a privateering bill; it actually made piracy legal again on the open seas — as long as the captured goods flowed to the North. Many British ships were boarded and looted by U.S. law.

In this case, with the situation spiraling out of control, the British government on April 5, 1863, ordered the seizure of the Alexandra, yet another raider ship destined for the South.

Want some more fun stuff? At the time, Great Britain and Russia were involved in what was termed the Great Game, a virtual pre-play of the 20th century's Cold War. That's right, Russia and Britain were playing international political chess, parrying and blocking each other's moves into sovereign countries all over the world.

And in this period, Russia thought, "Well, if England is giving ships to the Confederacy, we'll help out the Union cause." In September of 1863, a number of Russian warships under the command of Rear Admiral Lisovskii arrived in New York Harbor for their new assignment, while a squadron under Rear Admiral Popov put into San Francisco just a month later. And the only thing that kept Russia from becoming a fighting ally with the North in the war was that England, playing the Great Game, got France and Austria to tell the Russians to bug out, or risk a war with them.

Russia took the cue and left in April of 1864.

Of course, one day the war ended, as all wars do. And immediately American ship owners, the same ones whose vessels the Union Navy had confiscated and in many cases lost, started screaming for financial restitution, not from our government but from England. One told the New York press, "These raiders were build of English oak in an English yard, armed with English guns, manned by English crew and sunk in the English Channel."

On April 13, 1869, with tempers no cooler, Senator Sumner of Massachusetts delivered a speech in Congress demanding $2 billion in compensation for the damages done by British-built ships during the Civil War. This was totally out of the question, and the British Navy and Army were actually stronger than ours in that year, but England decided to go to arbitration on the issue. At the Geneva Tribunal of 1872, Britain agreed to pay us $15.5 million for its transgression.

And that, my friends, is the story — of how Alaska came to be part of the United States.

Remember, England and Russia were in the middle of the 19th century's version of the Cold War. We were mad at England for building ships for the Confederacy. So, when Alaska, then known as Russian America, was up for bids, England would have been the logical choice to purchase the land. After all, it would have completed Canada from coast to coast.

But Russia wasn't about to let England have Alaska. They were in the middle of the Great Game, vying for territory; and so it was logical for Russia to offer Alaska to us, as we in turn were having our own problems with Britain. One of Seward's underlying thoughts in making this purchase was to keep England from packaging it into Canada.

And that's how we came to buy Alaska, because the Civil War was really fought all over the world.

36. When Nature is the Terrorist

Lately we've heard a great deal of talk about what we should do as a nation to prepare ourselves for the possibility of another terrorist attack, this time using chemical or biological weapons. Plans have been made, and we've already been assured that should such an event take place, our cities, our counties and our states are ready to handle the crisis.

So, it might be a good time to remind everyone that just such an attack has already taken place once, in one of America's largest cities. That time it wasn't terrorism, but what took place was every bit as devastating — and it could happen again.

It was July 12th, and for the most part the city was bustling about its business as usual. No one but the victim paid much attention when Ethel Young became one of the first to be stricken. What Ethel and the rest of the city didn't know was that hundreds of others had been exposed at the same time she had.

Her first symptom was nothing more than a severe headache; soon, however, Ethel found herself almost incapable of standing or moving about. When severe nausea attacked her, she had no idea that within 48 hours of exposure all of her systems could start shutting down completely. By the time she realized how bad her condition was, Ethel Young couldn't make it across the room to call for help.

That same day, Leonard Hymer, Robert Yankovich, Edward Hoffman and Lydia Payne, among many others, were also exposed. And they too began the process of dying.

Robert Scates, head of the city's mobile emergency services, soon realized that he had a serious crisis on his hands. Already his emergency crews had been out on the streets for 28 hours at a stretch, not once returning to their base stations, dealing with one death after another. So Scates called his superior. Begging him to force a recall of all medical personnel, Scates explained that the increasing calls to his station were jamming its switchboards. His boss hung up on him — but not before telling him to quit being paranoid.

It would be the start of a very long week in the city. Before it finally ended, more than 700 people would have died. Moreover, the fact that this horrifying, large-scale event ever took place is one of America's best kept secrets.

By the third day of the attack, hundreds had already died. City hospitals, and there were many, started closing their doors to new admissions; their staffs already had more of the dead and dying than they could possibly handle. Twenty-three hospitals in all refused to take any more of the exposed.

City police and their squad cars were drafted to start carrying newly discovered dead bodies, many already in a state of decomposition, to local morgues. The backup of police cars bringing in the dead was so severe that filling out each body's paperwork often cost the officers an hour and a half — precious time they could have been using to find those who'd been exposed, but were still living. The magnitude of the crisis and its potential danger to the living became apparent when the mayor quietly offered anyone on parole a full pardon — in exchange for helping to dispose of the bodies.

Finally, the city's morgue, one of the largest in the nation, suddenly found itself out of room for the dead. In order to store those bodies still awaiting death certificates, the city morgue was forced to rent refrigerated meat trailers.

At that point, the city's Chief Medical Examiner decided that enough was enough. Edmund Donoghue informed the mayor that it was time to call a state of emergency. Further, he warned, the public should immediately be informed; everyone's aid should be enlisted in finding the victims and getting them help before it was too late. But, although 400 people had died by then, the mayor rejected Donoghue's advice. Instead, he demanded a statement characterizing these deaths as stemming from natural causes — at the same time prohibiting the Medical Examiner from releasing any exact numbers to the press.

With that, the media finally got hold of the story. However, instead of alerting readers and viewers to the tragedy taking place in their midst, the media took sides politically about whether the mayor or the medical examiner was right. And that very day, another 100 Americans died.

And then, in the middle of all this death, much of the city lost power, complicating matters and blocking rescues even more. At this point, the Centers for Disease Control got involved to sort things out. It

didn't take them long to make their decision: The Medical Examiner had been right. The mayor, however, purportedly to "avoid alarming the population at large," had engaged in a cover-up of serious proportions.
At that moment, a bit of almost hysterically comic relief was briefly introduced: Mary Gade, head of that state's environmental protection agency, issued a report that praised the local air quality.

This city had paramedics working 28-hour shifts, hospitals refusing to take any more of the stricken, and a Medical Examiner screaming for disclosure and help. Unfortunately, it also had a mayor demanding that any reports call a staggering number of deaths "natural," while forbidding the examiner to disclose the actual number of those killed. And all the while, almost every day, another 100 expectant fathers, loving mothers, bright sons and baby daughters died.

It is believed that from July 12th to the 19th, 739 individuals died in this city. And the count was probably higher, all told; according to Dr. Jane Dematte of Michael Reese Hospital, many of her patients were still dying from the event's effects weeks later. Such drawn-out deaths were not included in the official final count. By the end of that one week, however, so many people had died that the mass grave in which the city hastily buried them measured 160 feet long by 10 feet wide.
Now: Do you know the city, do you know the event, and do you know the year?

The city was Chicago, and the year was 1995. Seven hundred and thirty-nine people dead in seven days, many buried in a mass grave, and it all took place just seven years ago. And more than likely, you've never heard a thing about it.

But, I hear you asking, what caused these deaths? What on earth can anybody be exposed to that starts breaking your body down in just 48 hours? A simple heat wave, that's what.

Seven hundred thirty-nine dead in seven days, in just one American city. It makes you think that this West Nile Virus may have been just a tad overblown.

And the mayor who lied about the facts and kept important information from citizens when it might have saved many lives? The same mayor who would win re-election that year, by an overwhelming majority: None other than Richard M. Daley. That's the same mayor who, ironically, headed the U.S. Conference of Mayors the very next year. And the year after that, 1997, Daley was named Municipal Leader of the Year by American City and County magazine, a Public Official of the Year by Governing magazine and Politician of the Year by Library Journal.

Some heroes emerge, in looking back on this story. The paramedics themselves, the police officers ferrying the dead, and the city's medical workers must have gone through hell, knowing that they could expect no help to provide care for the unending onslaught of the dead and dying. And their leaders did their best; Robert Scates, head of the city's paramedics, recognized the crisis on day two and begged for help, but was denied. Edmund Donoghue, the city's Chief Medical Examiner, confronted the mayor with the crisis and was ordered to hush it up.

But the reality that was suppressed then is some history we might do well to remember. Seven years ago a heat wave hit Chicago; it lasted only one week, but on just the second day paramedics were going 28 hours without returning to their stations. By the third day 18 hospitals had closed their doors to all new admissions. The city's morgue finally had to rent refrigerated trucks to store the dead. And all this resulted from a crisis that struck and killed fewer than 1,000 people: officially, only 739 people died in seven days.
Now, I'm not a Mensa member, but if something that our technology can so easily deal with causes that much of a meltdown in a city's emergency system, how are we to believe that we can ever be prepared to cope with the results of a chemical or biological attack?

What's worse, if it happened, would anyone ever tell us? After all, Chicago has kept this secret for seven years. And that was far from the only time this has happened: 1,250 people died in the heat wave of 1980. And during one week in 1963, more people died in America than were killed during the attack of September 11th: four thousand, six hundred and fifty.

So we've known it could happen. We installed the emergency crews because we knew it would happen again — and still, it took Chicago by surprise. And then the city was able to bury the facts so that no one knew - no one learned any lessons from Chicago, unless it was how effective a communication blackout can be.

Nature, at least in terms of fatalities, would seem to have been a bigger threat to our citizens than terrorism.

We've all seen horrifying images of certain natural disasters' destruction in the news. Nature's impact on our social systems, however, hasn't been much in the spotlight; so perhaps it's not surprising that the nation hasn't yet learned how to deal with the aftermath of natural emergencies. On the other hand, it's hardly reassuring to reflect that the first thing that came to one city leader's mind when crisis struck was pardoning criminals — if they would help him to dispose of the silent dead, silently.

37. The Start of a Frightening Time-1946

January of 1946: For Americans everywhere, it should have been the best of times. In only five years - think a 60-month car loan - America had gone from enduring the end days of the Great Depression, when we still had over 20% unemployment, to becoming the world's most dominant power; a period when 5 million of our citizens had heeded the call to a war - one in which not one, but two major powers were defeated in a conflict that spanned the world. Now our men and women were returning home, filled with a new sense of self-confidence and the firm belief that nothing could ever again stand in the way of our country's greatness. In that short period, from January of 1941 to January of 1946, we had changed the world and ended a decade-long recession in the process. By January of 1946, America would be responsible for half of the world's gross domestic product - and yet, in reality, our own economy would be close to disaster. More work would have to be done, but now these problems could be tackled with greater confidence than ever before. For now all Americans knew that no obstacle was insurmountable.

That's why it's surprising that, only two years later, we would live through a period of being more fearful than we had ever been in our history - believing that the world was a far more dangerous place. And to this day, in the back of our minds we still carry the skeptical knowledge that our country can be brought down - possibly from within. That national self-doubt is a permanent legacy of the election of 1948.

It had actually started before the surrender of Japan, in August of 1945. That's when President Harry Truman declared that Russia was already in violation of the Yalta Agreement, as it intended not to allow free elections in Eastern Europe after the war. As most politicians eventually have, Truman would tell the American people that Russians only understood one language, the language of force - and that was exactly what we were going to speak to them. And as Truman continued to harp on that subject, more and more of us came to believe that from that day forward, the world could be divided into darkness and light, good and evil - a delusion we still cling to today.

Yes, Harry Truman often went public concerning the problem of International Communism. Why? Political Power: Truman knew that anti-Communism was becoming the rallying cry of the Republican Party. That point was proven by the midterm elections of 1946, when a dramatic rise in the number of that party's candidates elected to Congress gave the Republicans control of that institution.

Then in October of 1946, the U.S. Chamber of Commerce released an extremely controversial - and scary - report. It claimed that American Communists had infiltrated government agencies, including the State Department, and that communists were setting themselves up within our schools, movies, newspapers and radio. It is because of that charge in late 1946 that today we still hear our media called liberal, liberal being the new term for communistic.

It should be noted at this point that, in spite of Truman's public scaremongering on this new threat, privately he told his associates that he in no way believed that Communism was any sort of danger to the nation. He said that the American public had far too much common sense ever to fall for that line of nonsense. However, each political party then fought to position itself as the only one that could keep America secure from this threat.

In January of 1947, the Republicans reactivated the House Committee on Un-American Activities to play the Red card. That fall Harry Truman fired his Secretary of Commerce and former Vice President, Henry Wallace, after Wallace made a speech which Truman considered too friendly to Russia. Wallace and many

Democrats moved over to the Progressive Party to attempt to take the White House from Truman in 1948.

So now Truman, himself a Democrat, faced not one, but three different threats to his presidency for the 1948 election: Strom Thurmond and his Dixiecrats in the South, the Republicans and Wallace's Progressives. And so Truman came up with a plan, a way to co-opt the Republicans' control of the national security issue, while defusing the power of the Dixiecrats. Most important, Truman realized that he must totally discredit the left wing of the Democratic Party, the Progressives, as somehow being disloyal to the nation. That's right, it would be the Democrats themselves that would tar the liberal wing of their party as leftists. That image lasts to this day, only now the Republicans have picked up the verbal hammer that the Democrats forged.

On March 12, 1947, the president made his next move: In front of a joint session of Congress, he delivered the Truman Doctrine - in which he stated that from that day on, America would be the defender of the free world; we would use all of our might to stop the naked Soviet aggression that he said had already begun. Truman had solid political advice on how to take these moves forward; Senator Arthur Vandenberg had counseled him that, to win the public over to his viewpoint, he would have to scare the hell out of them.

Nine days later, on March 21st, Truman announced a loyalty program for all government employees, which only confirmed to the nation that Communists had started taking over our democracy. But in spite of his newfound power, being the man positioned as the true savior of freedom both at home and abroad, Harry Truman worried about trampling on our civil liberties. So he had specifically written a passage into his executive order defining "disloyal" activities.

In December of 1947, Truman's Attorney General released a list of known subversive organizations. The House Committee on Un-American Activities chimed in with its own hearings on Communist influence in Hollywood, blacklisting the Hollywood Ten that same year. Truman then deported 100 left-wing aliens in a highly publicized way; and in May of 1948, with the election in sight, Alistair Cooke would write, "The Democrats and Republicans are racing each other for the anti-Communist stakes."

Today we think the 1948 election was simply a contest between Harry Truman and Thomas Dewey. But in fact, it was Henry Wallace and his Progressive Wing of the Democratic Party that formed the biggest threat to Harry Truman's re-election. And to counter it, Truman knew, he would have to destroy his real opponent once and for all. The fallout from what happened next is still felt to this day: Truman stated to the media that "Henry Wallace and his Communists should go to Russia and help them against our country."

Suddenly, everywhere the Progressive Party went its members were harassed by local officials; at platform speeches fruit was thrown at them. And one Progressive Party candidate for the Senate was stoned by an audience in Illinois, then ordered out of town by the local police. Others were assaulted or kidnapped, and a few were actually knifed. They were barred from making speeches in Ohio, California, Missouri, Michigan and Iowa - and, when the election came, Wallace received just 1/5 of the votes that public opinion polls had given him a year earlier.

Things were about to change. For the fact was that in spite of these very public battles for the hearts and minds of the citizens of this country, almost no one really felt threatened by Communism. Hollywood had been exonerated by the House Committee on Un-American Activities, which had thrown out just 10 actors and filmmakers. No one was mad at Lucille Ball or Humphrey Bogart, who had both flown to Washington to state that Congress had lost its mind on this issue.

As for Truman, once he was re-elected, he said the Committee on Un-American activities was suddenly obsolete and unnecessary. He intended to put an end to the witch-hunts that he had helped start forever. So, even though he had been the one to start the government loyalty programs, he proceeded to slam the Republicans for trashing too many good and loyal employees.

Truman had won; the Progressive Party was dead forever, the Dixiecrats destroyed and the Republicans humbled. Truman was altering his course, to set out to balance what he himself had put out of kilter.
Then came 1949, it began with Richard Nixon reopening the case of Alger Hiss. In August, China fell to the Communists under Chairman Mao, and one month later Russia had the bomb. More ominous, before another year had passed, North Koreans would cross the 38th parallel.

For the previous three years Americans had heard the threat, but they'd ignored it. Going on about rebuilding the American economy, they'd felt like Truman - that while a few of their neighbors might be a

little Red, they were no threat at all. But, China, Hiss, the Russian Nuke and the start of hostilities in Korea changed all that. Soon we were building bomb shelters in our backyards and teaching our children to duck and cover at school.

Thirty-eight years and $5 trillion later, it was over - but not for long. Most missed it, but Nixon, once the champion of anti-Communism, was the one who bridged the gap to China in the early seventies, while Mao Zedong was still alive. Most forget that it was Ronald Reagan who tore down our personal walls with Russia, long before the Berlin Wall fell. And most forget that the threat is still there, we just don't think about it anymore or don't think it is life altering.

All that remains is the political fight over who can best protect the nation from outside threats - and that fight was started not by the Republicans, but by the Democrats themselves, to ensure that their man won re-election to the White House in 1948.

38. A Frightening Joint Chiefs of Staff

Few today remember that as America entered the 1960s, even before Vietnam, we were a nation torn apart by political and ideological differences. Even fewer remember how many high-ranking members of our military were blood-and-thunder anti-Communists and didn't care who knew it.

The election of John Kennedy to the Presidency seemed to be the line in the sand to many of these Communist hunters. Again it seemed to them, America was being taken over by the Reds; and, once again, McCarthyism's ugly shadow fell over the country.

Who can forget the televised news broadcast then, that covered the meeting of Project Alert? We saw Colonel Mitchell Paige - a retired Marine Corps officer and Medal of Honor winner - call Supreme Court Justice Earl Warren "a Commie ... who should be taken out and hung."

Long-time Dallas resident General Edwin Walker was on active duty in West Germany during the 1960 presidential campaign. In lecturing his soldiers on the correct way to vote, he handed out printed voting guide pamphlets. Interestingly, all were from the ultra-conservative Americans for Constitutional Action and the John Birch Society. Like Col. Paige, Walker told the media that Eleanor Roosevelt and Harry Truman were definitely pink, and Edward R. Murrow and Walter Cronkite were certainly pro-Communist. Censured for that statement after Kennedy took office, Walker resigned in protest.

Still, these warriors had nothing on the head of our Joint Chiefs of Staff, General Lymon L. Lemnitzer, for outright hostility to the new President's vision of the American way of life.

Dwight Eisenhower had appointed Lemnitzer to head the Joint Chiefs in 1957. Lemnitzer had been one of Eisenhower's aides in the war before serving with Patton during the Sicily campaign; although Lemnitzer was politically on the far right, it is fair to say that he worshiped the more moderate Ike. Kennedy, however, he detested, claiming that the new Commander in Chief had no military experience. Apparently, Lemnitzer had conveniently forgotten that Kennedy had served, with distinction, in the Navy during the Second World War.

Lemnitzer's single focus in life was to completely destroy Communism wherever it might rear its ugly head. And nothing, in the General's mind, was a more immediate threat to America than Castro in Cuba, sitting 90 miles off our coast.

Though they agreed on that, however, there was one point on which Lemnitzer and Ike differed widely. Before leaving office, Eisenhower had approved the operation that would be known as the Bay of Pigs, a CIA-sponsored militant action in Cuba to overthrow Castro. Lemnitzer, on the other hand, believed that nothing less than our full-scale military invasion of that Caribbean country would do the job. Furthermore, Lemnitzer despised CIA covert operations. The fact that they'd worked in Iran and Guatemala meant nothing to him; it was our military's job to save the American way of life, and in his frequently expressed opinion, the military should have been in charge of those ops in the first place.

Lemnitzer's main obstacle was that Kennedy was even less likely to send our military to invade Cuba than Ike had been. No matter how many plans Lemnitzer drew up for the invasion, Kennedy's Secretary of Defense, Robert McNamara, simply put them in his filing cabinet. What else could he have done? The world

community would not have stood idly by while America - just because we didn't care for their brand of politics - attacked a sovereign country.

What Eisenhower, Kennedy and McNamara didn't know, however, was that Lemnitzer and the Joint Chiefs of Staff were drawing up their own plan for starting a war in Cuba. Lemnitzer approved the first draft on January 19th, 1961, just as Ike was leaving office.

It was based on the sinking of the Maine, the event that started the Spanish American War. What Lemnitzer and the Joint Chiefs developed was a plan in which some of our shadier operatives would launch a full-scale attack - on our own soldiers at Cuba's Guatanamo Bay. The Joint Chiefs would then unanimously blame Castro and his Communists, and nobody in either the American public or the world at large would believe Castro when he protested that he'd had nothing to do with it. After all, whom would you have believed? The Joint Chiefs or Castro?

First, though, Lemnitzer knew, the CIA operation would have to move forward, although he felt their chance of success was nil. On that point, General Lemnitzer was correct. Yet, in all the National Security Council's meetings and discussions on the Bay of Pigs, Lemnitzer never once gave a negative assessment of the operation. He didn't lie, exactly; he just never said anything at all - simply voted for the CIA to move ahead at the last meeting on the subject on April 4th, 1961.

The General went home that night and wrote a 52-page summary predicting how the Bay of Pigs operation might go. He titled it "The Cuban Debacle."

Thirteen days later the Bay of Pigs was on; and, as the Joint Chiefs had privately predicted, it ended in utter disaster. Lemnitzer, however, began to think it just possible that now might be the perfect moment to get the sympathy of the world and of other Americans. If he put his plan into effect and attacked our own men at Guantanamo Bay now, it'd be easy to convince everyone that the first failed invasion had provoked Castro to retaliate.

Then, on a Saturday morning in early November of 1961, the political winds shifted, taking the ship of state in a whole new direction. Attorney General Robert Kennedy held a meeting in the Cabinet room in which the President, saying that he wanted an end to our Cuban problem, assigned Air Force General Edward Lansdale to head up Operation Mongoose. Finally, it appeared that the military was back in charge. Not for long, though, because two factors were moving forward from the background.

For some time, Robert McNamara had been concerned with the numerous war plans landing on his desk; they seemed to advocate invading countries for no other reason than that they were Communist. So McNamara commissioned an internal study on the matter, and it discovered that military seminars were often reduced to, and I quote, "extreme right wing, witch hunting, mudslinging revivals and bigoted one-sided presentations."

The Senate Foreign Relations Committee, studying the same situation, reported the problem of right-wing extremism in the military as "a considerable danger." Senator Al Gore Sr. knew who the culprits were; he called for an investigation of our Joint Chiefs of Staff - and, yes, of General Lymon Lemnitzer.

Now under fire from all sides, Lemnitzer believed it was time to put a new plan, Operation Northwoods, into effect. This plan, an outright attack on the American public, included gangland-style killings on our streets, bombings in Washington, Miami and elsewhere, and hijacking commercial aircraft - or shooting them down - and then framing Castro for the carnage. Lemnitzer's newest plan of action was nothing less than terrorist attacks against American citizens on our own soil - blamed on Castro.

Lemitzer would present Operation Northwoods to Robert McNamara in early March of 1962. Not included in this presentation, although it was later found in other declassified documents, was the most frightening part of this pseudo invasion: Lemnitzer planned to blow up John Glenn's rocket on takeoff, letting the entire nation witness it on TV - and blame Communists for this attack by sabotage. Fortunately for the world, Operation Northwoods would never be approved, even as presented.

Kennedy suddenly decided to tone down the rhetoric about Cuba. On February 26, 1962, he ordered General Lansdale - whose plans were getting wilder and wackier and going nowhere - to stand down on Operation Mongoose. The military was again out of the loop, and the project returned to CIA hands.

At the same time, Senator Gore called for Lemnitzer's removal as Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of

Staff; in fact, Gore wanted all of them removed. Lemnitzer would be put in charge of NATO, as good a place as any for the rabid anti-Communist. The General later served with distinction on Gerald Ford's Foreign Intelligence Advisory Board.

It is impossible to determine today how many knew about Operation Northwoods, many documents have been destroyed. Many remain, however, that make it chillingly clear that the Joint Chiefs once plotted against the American public so that they could invade Cuba.

Certainly, the proposed attack on our own troops at Guantanamo sounds suspiciously similar to the Gulf of Tonkin Incident. But we don't know; some things are still classified. Still, this Cuban incident may be why so many great military men who served in Vietnam, like Colin Powell, today demonstrate great caution about war and its motives. Perhaps they remember that, as young soldiers, many of their superiors believed that all wars against Communism were right and would do anything to wage them.

The turbulence of the sixties started the day that Kennedy took office. A battle of the moderates against the extreme right, it was also a battle for the soul of our nation, and that time the good side of our government won.

One last ironic piece of the story. Today a Lemnitzer Center for NATO and European Union Studies now exists ... at Kent State University.

39. Twain's Late Life Politics

As someone who studies history, I find it harder all the time to watch documentaries on television, simply because it appears that few historians are hired to edit and correct their scripts. That was certainly the case with late 2002's six-hour film on Teddy Roosevelt. While it was a brilliant piece of work, its reporting of our history contained several major mistakes.

Mark Twain, America's first important writer, suffers equally from revisionism. He was brilliant in his time, and today his works are still read by millions each year, enjoyed by generation after generation. But, when you watch any biography of Twain, you're left with the impression that in his last decade of life, he lost his writing skills and most of his money on bad business ventures and peacefully retired, a once brilliant satirist turned cynic.

Nothing could have been further from the truth. It wasn't that Mark Twain wasn't writing anymore, it's that, as often as not, his works were no longer published. You see, Mark Twain had become an enemy of the state.

It's no wonder; this from his pen on December 31, 1900. "I bring you the stately matron called Christendom, returning bedraggled, besmirched and dishonored from pirate raids. Her soul full of meanness, her pockets full of boodle and her mouth full of pious hypocrisies. Give her soap and a towel, but hide the looking glass."

Twain would write other criticisms of our new national policies during that period, for the new super patriots had started using as their slogan "my country, right or wrong." My, didn't that statement last a long time; it was still heard in the sixties. But Twain wrote that "our country, right or wrong" was monarchical patriotism - the diametric opposite of what America was all about. He also said, in a speech in 1901, "On the question of politics the nation is divided, half patriots and half traitors, and no man can tell which from which. "

Keep in mind that Mark Twain was always an observer who wrote about the social conditions in this country. His works reflected injustice that needed to be corrected, and the public loved him for it. So why is Mark Twain's last decade of writings dismissed from history? Because he became a social critic of the government.

It all started with the Spanish American War. Twain, who had been living overseas and lecturing for a decade, was at first a huge supporter of the action. After all, it was being sold to the American public as our government fighting to liberate Cuba from the tyranny of empire, dictators and despots. Yes, we were going to free the masses of another country and install democracy for all.

Twain was filled with enthusiasm. Writing to his friend and pastor, Joseph Twichell, on June 17, 1898 from Vienna, part of his letter reads, “I have never enjoyed a war - even in written history - as I am enjoying this one. For this is the worthiest one that was ever fought, so far as my knowledge goes. It is a worthy thing to fight for one’s own freedom; it is another sight finer to fight for another’s man.”

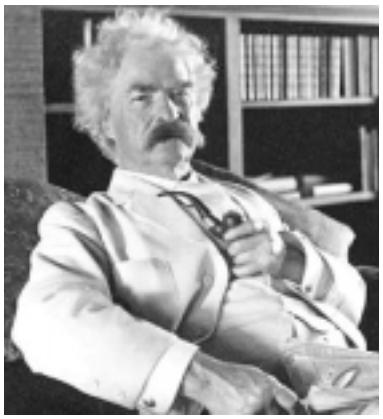
However, by the time Twain returned home from Europe on October 15, 1900, his opinion had changed completely. Why? Because of our ongoing war in the Philippines. Mentioned for one paragraph or so in our history books today as the Filipino Insurrection, in reality it was closer to a massacre. Now, keep in mind, all of America knew what was going on in the Pacific. And Twain wasn’t alone in his position against the war. No, he was the voice of the majority of Americans by 1900, damning our government for saying we were fighting to free subjugated people and give them democracy, when Washington’s real aim was to take over those countries.

Still, when Twain arrived back home, newspapers reporters filled the docks in New York for our returning literary hero.

And like most Americans today, Twain was conflicted. He didn’t want war but still liked the President. Asked by the Chicago Tribune on the day of his return, “Are you for William Jennings Bryan?” Twain replied, “I guess not. I’m rather inclined toward McKinley, even if he is an imperialist.”

That same day, in an interview with the New York Herald, Twain was quoted as saying about the Filipino War, “Here are people who have suffered for three centuries. We can make them as free as ourselves, give them a government and a country of their own. I have now seen that we do not intend to free, but to subjugate the people of the Philippines. We have gone to conquer, not redeem.”

Six months later, still speaking out against American actions, Twain wrote in another letter to his pastor, “This nation is like all the others that have been spewed upon the earth - ready to shout for any cause that will tickle its vanity or fill its pocket. What a hell of a heaven it will be, when they get all these hypocrites assembled there!”



Twain had already written his Private Philosophy and wanted to publish it, but his wife Livy wouldn’t allow it read aloud to her, much less sent off to his publisher. Twain noted that Livy believed that it would destroy him with the public.

On February 27, 1901, Twain was asked to speak in front of the New York State Assembly on a bill that favored allowing Osteopathic Medicine. Speaking against the bill was Dr. Frank van Fleet. Van Fleet who didn’t say one word against osteopathy, but instead attacked Twain as a person whose opinion should be discounted. Fleet said, “Mark Twain is not to be taken seriously. When he came back from his trip abroad he talked of a dishonored flag. We did not take him seriously, for if we had, we might have mobbed him and rightfully so.”

Twain was also dismayed by the fundamentalist clergy, preaching non-stop on the valor of war.

On March 22, 1905, Twain wrote his most important piece of the new century. It was titled The War Prayer. The story starts in a patriotic church, with a minister holding a service to send the young men of his town off to war.

It begins with the minister’s invocation: “God, the all terrible, thou who ordainest Thunder, thy clarion, lighting and thy sword.”

There is then a long prayer for our victory. As that prayer ends, an older stranger walks into the church, pushes the minister aside and suggests that the congregation heard only the spoken half of his prayer. God heard both halves, he says, and he wants to know if this is really what they want:

The other, unspoken half of the prayer, says the stranger, is: O Lord, our God, help us to tear their soldiers to bloody shreds with our shells, help us to cover their smiling fields with the pale forms of their patriot dead, help us to drown the thunder of the guns with the wounded, writhing in pain, help us to lay waste their humble homes with a hurricane of fire, help us to wring the hearts of their unoffending widows with

unavailing grief, help us to turn them out roofless with their little children to wander unfriended through wastes of their desolated land in rags and hunger and thirst. The prayer goes on, but the end of the story is that the members of that church were stunned at this stranger's prayer, believing him to be a lunatic, because what he said "made no sense."

Harper's Bazaar refused to print the story. The public would not see it until 1923, 13 years after Twain's death.

Don't be misled, Twain moved the nation. The Anti-Imperialist League, formed in Boston in 1898, gathered more members, including former President Grover Cleveland and Moorfield Storey, who would become the first president of the NAACP. And in the strangest pairing yet, Andrew Carnegie would sit beside Samuel Gompers of the American Federation of Labor.

The final count of the dead in the Philippines would be 20,000 of their soldiers and at least 400,000 of their civilians, with a loss to our troops of just 5,000.

Near the end of the war, someone wrote to tell Twain how wrong he was, saying: "Even if the war was wrong, we are in it and must fight it out. We cannot retire from it without bringing dishonor." Twain replied that an inglorious peace is better than a dishonorable war.

And so history remembers Mark Twain as having had writer's block in his last decade; those who do point out what he wrote claim it was just an old man's cynicism. He moved the nation, nonetheless.

When the First World War, the Second World War and Korea ended, America was seen as a nation freeing others from tyranny. In fact, that's what we were. But remember, these were the wars fought by the generation that had read Twain's last works on America's wars of conquest while they were being written.

Today, kids will still read Tom Sawyer, but it is doubtful that any will ever know of Mark Twain's The War Prayer.

40. Ethan Allen-Revoluntionary Hero?

Okay, here's an easy one for you: Name the greatest traitor in American history.

Most of you probably picked Benedict Arnold. Try as you might, you just can't find anyone lower than Arnold in the annuals of people who have betrayed the American cause. However, there might be a far better choice for the greatest traitor of the Revolution, though it might surprise most. This man was only concerned with himself and his possessions. He was a crafty land speculator, a man who right in the middle of the war secretly negotiated with the British to take his part of the country out of the battle and make it part of Canada. In return, he was to get a huge land grant from the King of England. This man terrorized New Yorkers and ran them out of his colony. And we regard him today as one of the heroes of the Revolution. We've named a mountain, naval battleships, and a large chain of furniture stores after him. I'm talking about Ethan Allen.

Sure, you remember Ethan Allen as the hero of the battle for Fort Ticonderoga, and he was. It's the rest of his actions during the Revolution that make Benedict Arnold look like a saint.

Ethan Allen was born in Litchfield, Connecticut, on January 21, 1738. He moved to the area we now know as Vermont when he was 31, after both his sister and mother died.

Now, here's a part of American history few people realize. Because most of this country was still wilderness, land speculation was big business. British governors often gave out huge land grants to friends, who in turn sold off large pieces and got rich.

However, as you might imagine, it was a case of the wealthy getting wealthier and the average guy not faring nearly as well. Ethan Allen fell into the latter category, but don't be misled. His motivation was not so much to stop unscrupulous British governors as to deal himself in on their action. One constant thorn in his side was the battle over the area we call Vermont. The western area of that state was hotly contested; New York, by a decree of King George, seemingly had the best claim to it.

As a youth Allen had studied the political theory of Republicanism. At the time it was defined as life, liberty and the right to own property. Today we've removed the property part in favor of the more generic pursuit of happiness.

So, while Allen was trying to acquire property in Vermont, the battle over which other state owned the

area often had two different individuals laying claim to the same tract of land. All in all, the situation was a mess.

Allen had had all this fun he felt he could deal with. It was time to take the battle over Vermont to all the individuals in it that were pro-New York rule. And it was this guerilla movement that created Allen's Green Mountain Boys.

Once they were formed, Ethan Allen and his band of marauders burned the homes of those who were in favor of New York's claim on their land. They arrested sheriffs in the area and held them against their will. Allen destroyed some of the local mills, and he held kangaroo courts to try people who weren't seeing things his way. Today he'd have been seen as a Timothy McVeigh type. He was, in fact, declared an outlaw by the British crown.

Then came the Revolution, and a chance at redemption, so Allen and his Green Mountain Boys fought for a while for the American cause. His first outing with the Green Mountain Boys in that period is what Allen is most famous for, the taking of Fort Ticonderoga in May of 1775. Even today he is remembered for his actions during that battle.

Of course, everyone forgets who his co-commander was in that campaign: Benedict Arnold. But that's what you get for being known as a traitor - written out of history.

Allen's second battle was for Montreal, then only a small city of 1,200 people. Allen went up with 150 men; five were killed, and he beat a hasty retreat back to the mountains. He didn't get far: The British captured and then imprisoned him in England for two years. In a prisoner exchange two years later, Allen was set free and returned to this country.

In 1778 he appeared before the Continental Congress, lobbying for Vermont's right to statehood. Again, not because he was loyal to Vermont, but simply because he felt he should have the right to be a land speculator and get rich. And that would be a whole lot easier if Vermont were its own state, not governed by New York or New Hampshire. He got nowhere.

So, in 1780, Allen secretly started negotiations with the Governor of Canada to surrender Vermont to the British. The negotiations lasted three years, but were never completed; Allen wanted too much in the way of land grants for himself. The governor of Canada also wrote in his official diary that he didn't trust Allen, as he was "one of the most treacherous individuals he'd ever met."

Then, in 1783, the Continental Congress found out about Ethan Allen's plan to make Vermont part of Canada and British rule. Here's the part most don't know. Ethan Allen was brought up on a charge of treason. And here's how he got off. Allen claimed he'd been negotiating with the British simply to force the Continental Congress to admit Vermont as its own state. Yeah, that's why he negotiated in private and no one knew about it. Right.

We should also point out that the only reason that Vermont isn't part of New York today is that the Continental Congress ordered George Washington to invade the state and force compliance with New York's claims, and Washington refused.

So, how did Vermont become a state? Ethan Allen turned on other outlaws like himself. It was Shay's Rebellion in Western Massachusetts that did it. Farmers in that region, who were heavily in debt, rioted, attacking the armory in Springfield. Then they fled to the Green Mountain region; Allen and his guerilla force, the farmers incorrectly believed, would give them shelter and protect them against the government's forces. But when they got there, Allen offered nothing of the kind; he was no longer a rebel, he claimed, and was therefore civilized.

Sentiment turned in Congress, New York went over to Allen's side, and Vermont became a state.

Allen died two years later in 1789 while harvesting hay. He was 51 years of age.

Allen seems to have been, according to all who knew him, nothing more than a thug who was only out for himself. He fought his neighbors, the British, then the Continental Congress, betraying everyone along the way. And for that he's a hero?

41. 1919-Red Raids

When the terrorists attacked the United States on September 11th last year, Washington was quick to point out that not since the War of 1812 had the United States faced enemy action on our own soil.
Of course, I was just as quick to point out that that simply wasn't true. Anarchists had been blowing up things in American throughout the period of 1905 to 1920.

Then Washington put the face on the enemy behind the recent attacks, Osama Bin Laden. I suggested that he was just the poster boy for terrorism, someone to focus our hatred on. Sure enough, our ongoing battles are now against the greater danger to our society, but from the White House to the Pentagon, everyone now agrees, who cares if we ever catch Osama Bin Laden.

However, recently I've gone back and studied the anarchist bombings of America in the period before the First World War. What I found there was a textbook case, a virtual copy of the government's game plan for terrorism today.

Moreover, only one recognizable hero came out of that first conflict, J. Edgar Hoover. And it is questionable - did he do more to help America or hurt us as a society over the next 50 years? Like Osama has today, the Palmer Raids also put a face on our enemy: Emma Goldman's. But, if there's a lesson to be learned from our past, it's that once again we are attempting to destroy an enemy that's far too broad in scope - to the detriment of our ability to respond to other threats to our society.

Let's start off with the setup. Bombs had been going off virtually non-stop in this country since 1905. The most famous early case was when the Los Angeles Times was almost completely leveled by dynamite in 1911. Two men were apprehended and confessed to the crime. Both were members of the American Federal of Labor - the AFL. Then came the bombing of the May Day Parade in San Francisco in 1915.

The bombings started in earnest on April 28th, 1919, when a bomb was delivered to the home of Ole Hanson, Mayor of Seattle. It was disarmed. On April 29th, another bomb, delivered to the home of former US Senator Thomas Hardwick in Atlanta, blew up in his maid's hands.

And in the next few days, 34 more bombs were found being mailed to Oliver Wendell Holmes, Frederick C. Howe, then head of Ellis Island, Postmaster General Albert Burlson, Judge Kenesaw Mountain Landis, Secretary of Labor William Wilson, J. P. Morgan and John D. Rockefeller, to name just a few intended victims. Needless to say, it was a far bigger scare nationally than our anthrax situation of a few months back. Then on June 2, 1919, eight bombs went off in eight cities across America. One took off the front of our Attorney General's house; A. William Palmer claimed to have found a leaflet near his home, signed by the Anarchist Fighters.

His neighbor, Franklin Delano Roosevelt, said Palmer was so unnerved by the bombing that he reverted back to the Quaker language of his youth. Whatever the truth, Palmer started drawing up plans for a comprehensive assault on radicalism. He told Congress that he had information proving that anarchists were going to rise up and destroy America. Sound familiar?
He never produced any proof other than the bombings.

Moreover, Palmer was politically corrupt. He had been in charge of the seizure of German-owned property in America during the First World War. Much of the seized assets he managed to convert into hard cash for his Democratic friends.

Of course, the newspapers had a field day with June 2nd. They pointed out that bombings had been taking place in America for years, and yet no one in government had done anything about it. Now it had escalated to the most violent day of bombings ever. That should sound familiar also.

It was this event that started J. Edgar Hoover on his career, for Palmer put him in charge of the Radicals Division of the Bureau of Investigation. Now it was Hoover's job to convince the nation and Con-

gress that these bombings weren't random in nature, but in fact were the acts of a terrorist organization. Hoover wrote the masterpiece study on anarchists, based on studies of terrorist groups done by Pinkerton's Detective Agency in the 1890s. Part of Hoover's work read, "Every group was assumed to be led by a tight inner circle of conspirators, whose program and tactics are closely held secrets. These insiders were surrounded by an outer ring of followers, many of them unaware of the criminal purposes of their leaders." My, but doesn't that sound like the description of Al Qaeda today - and the highjackers, who we now say didn't even know they were on a suicide mission?

With Hoover's theory in place, the government could wage war on anyone, anywhere. Because we no longer had to prove that someone was part of the great anarchist conspiracy; they only had to have similar political thoughts to be considered part of the greater problem.

Then in conversations, Hoover was told that the government has always known that you have to put a face on your enemy. According to the documents from that meeting, Americans don't? fear what they can't see, nor can they hate a faceless enemy. Hate is important, so the enemy had to have a face.

Hoover found his mark, Emma Goldman, a known radical writer and lecturer. Hoover even looked up quotes from Goldman made after the bombing of the LA Times to prove her complicity. She had nothing to do with it, by the way. Hoover also found testimony from the man who had assassinated William McKinley, in which he stated that he had read some of Goldman's writings. To Hoover it was obvious: Goldman, the ringleader of this anarchist movement, was encoding messages in her writings and lectures, signaling her sleeper cells to rise up against this country. Sound familiar?

Washington managed to deport Goldman. But, then they claimed that their war against Anarchists was far from over, whether Goldman was in the picture or not. For they had to round up and neutralize everyone who subscribed to her political views. In short order Hoover rounded up 1,100 alleged anarchists; most were freed on judicial review. Just like today.

Washington came down hard on our immigration service, saying that they weren't doing enough to protect citizens from this type of danger.

Our Assistant Attorney General said that all trials concerning terrorists should be turned over to military tribunals. It's true; his quote: "Just let the military shoot one of these Reds, and it's worth more than a thousand arrests." I told you the parallels to today were scary; but Congress turned the White House down on that request.

There was even a country named as the sponsor for this new brand of terrorism. It wasn't Russia, it was Germany. Which Washington tried to paint as the real hotbed of Bolshevism.

There were cooler heads in the White House. Our own Assistant Secretary of Labor wrote that the Red Scare was a gigantic and cruel hoax foisted on the American public. But don't be misled: The American public bought into every last aspect of the news that America was under attack from within - mostly by foreigners, who never should have been allowed into this country.

It finally ended, or at least the biggest governmental push did, when judges, lawyers and civil libertarians all agreed that most of the people being rounded up were not guilty of anything more than fighting for decent wages and better living conditions. The public also found out that there was virtually no evidence to convict these alleged anarchists.

Hoover went on to head the FBI, Palmer faded from American politics, and the bombings stopped, as much from the '20s' boom years of prosperity as from any government action.

So, was there a legitimate threat to America at the time? Maybe, but not as large as the government tried to make it out to be. I'd like to point out that no one was ever arrested for those 34 mail bombs. No one was ever arrested for the eight bombs that went off in cities across America, including the home of the Attorney General.

It also appears that Franklin Delano Roosevelt was moved by his neighbor's house being bombed. For he worked on raising the income levels of the poorest Americans. Maybe he figured that no one in the middle class was going to start a revolution, only those who had nothing.

Finally, although there were those trying to destroy our government, here's the reality: There weren't many of them. Washington said there were hundreds of thousands, but my guess is about 20. Why? If there

hundreds of thousands of radical anarchists had been here, there would have been more than 42 bombs sent.

However, if you want to know the story of our current battle against terrorism and what its possible outcome will be, simply study the history of America during the Palmer Raids. The whole government game plan has already been laid out for you.

42. A Counterblaste to Smokers

"They who smoke tobacco can be compared only to men possessed who are in need of exorcizing. While their throats belch forth the stinking, poisonous fumes, they remain nonetheless thralls to the tobacco fiend, striving to entice all they meet to imitate their folly."

OK, name the author of that statement - Laura Miller or Johann Michael Mosche-erosh. Well, it was Johann and he made that statement about smokers in 1650.

No this isn't a story about being for or against smoking, for most people hate smokers and most smokers hate the fact that they can't quit. That much is given. However, one thing that drives me nuts is all the people who have sued tobacco companies recently for some illness they've come up with, crying in court that they had no clue whatsoever that smoking could be bad for your health. The truth is that each and every one of those defendants is a liar. Pure and simple. It's a waste of our courts and a prostitution of our judicial system. Because, since day one, everyone has known that long-term smoking isn't good for your health.

It all started with Rodrigo de Jerez, who sailed with Columbus on his very first voyage west in 1492. Exploring in Cuba after the first stop, Jerez noticed that the natives there were lighting a plant's leaves and inhaling the smoke - and he recognized it as the same type of plant that he had seen being chewed by the Arawak Indians on Hispaniola. Later, it was discovered that the natives on Antilles used a Y-shaped pipe to smoke those leaves. Their Indian word for the pipe was "tobacco;" the Spaniards mistook the pipe's name for that of the plant.

Jerez himself tried smoking the plant and discovered that he liked it. Which is why, when he returned home to Spain, he took tobacco back with him to continue his smoking pleasure. Immediately, all hell broke loose.

That's right, in his "History of the West Indies" in 1526, Fernandez de Oviedo wrote, "Among other evil practices, the Indians have one that is especially harmful, the inhaling of smoke which they call tobacco; I cannot imagine what pleasure they derive from this practice." At about the same time, Bishop Bartholome' de la Casas noted in his diary, "Spanish settlers in the West Indies have begun to smoke cigars. I have seen many Spaniards on the island who when reproached for such a disgusting habit, replied that they found it impossible to give up."

That's right, within thirty years of Europeans' coming to the New World, we had both social critics of smokers and the first written evidence that smokers claimed the habit was addicting.

Don't be misled: In Europe, physicians were already warning that smoking ravaged the human body, leaving it vulnerable to a variety of ills. And yes, complaints came in about second-hand smoke being nasty stuff.

So, why didn't a ban on tobacco end it right there and then? Simple: Other doctors and respected men started studying why perfectly healthy natives would smoke the stuff to begin with. According to the Indians, smoking stopped headaches and reduced stress. Not a bad thing, considering that the Arawaks would be completely wiped off the face of the earth within a few decades by Columbus and the Spaniards. Better to think that smoking killed them instead of the conquest.

Then in 1559 the French ambassador to Lisbon witnessed smoking first-hand and believed it to be some type of medicinal treatment. He wrote that tobacco cured sores, lesions, tumors and also headaches. He even sent tobacco back to France for others to try. That ambassador's name was Jean Nicot; he lent his name to the active ingredient in tobacco, nicotine.

James the Sixth of Scotland hated smokers and wouldn't allow them in his court. Elizabeth the First only tolerated the stuff, even allowing Sir Walter Raleigh to light up in her presence.

Now Lizzie the first was followed by King James the First, who took over the throne in 1603. And about the first thing the new King did was publish A Counterblaste to Tobacco, the first anti-smoking tirade in print. James doubted that tobacco was any type of medicine, pointed out how disgusting second-hand smoke was and scolded that proper people shouldn't copy the savages they picked up the habit from. James even wrote, "Yea, why doe we not denie God and adore the Devil as they doe?" It is interesting to note that King James published his book on smoking first; the King James Bible wouldn't come out for another eight years.

The point is that James's book got the point across in no uncertain terms, and many other books on the evils of smoking soon followed. But more and more Englishmen were taking up the habit; yet when James tried to raise the duty on tobacco to discourage smokers, Parliament wouldn't let him.

Finally, sixteen years later, in 1619, King James realized just how much money tobacco was bringing into his treasuries, so he made tobacco sales a royal monopoly. This is historic: King James was the first governmental official to publicly trash smoking while ensuring that he made plenty of money off tobacco sales.

In 1630, tired of having smoke blown in their faces, the Puritans of Massachusetts banned tobacco sales and smoking in public. And this is important: In 1647 Connecticut followed suit with a tobacco ban - excepting people who were 21 years of age and had already acquired a habit. That's right, the 1647 Connecticut law recognized that smoking was an addiction.

I should point out that in time both these laws were taken off the books.

In 1726 Cotton Mather, the same man who instigated the Salem Witch Trials, wrote in his Rules of Health, "If once you get into the way of smoking, there will be extreme hazard of your becoming a slave to the pipe and insatiably craving for it."

In 1613 Czar Michael of Russia banned tobacco: Anyone caught smoking would be flogged and their lips slit. In 1689 Peter the Great, a smoker, lifted the ban.

1633: Turkish Sultan Murad the Fourth forbade smoking in public; if he walked into a coffeehouse any smoker he saw was assassinated. The ban was lifted by Sultan Mohammed the Fourth, a smoker, in 1648.

Two hundred years later, Napoleon the Third, whose country was getting rich off tobacco taxes, wrote, "This vice brings in one hundred million francs in taxes every year. I will certainly forbid it at once - as soon as you name a virtue that brings in as much revenue."

The first American cigarette came our way in 1869. Then James B. Duke decided to get into the business, using James Bonsack's new invention that could make 120,000 cigarettes a day.

Within twenty years, cigarette use had seen a hundred-fold increase. Enough so that kids were smoking. By 1890, so many states were furious with tobacco companies' targeting children for their products that 26 states passed laws making it a crime to sell cigarettes to children. So much for Joe Camel being the first kids' campaign.

By 1904 major publications such as Harpers were running stories on how inconsiderate smokers were around non-smokers. So that concept isn't new either.

Henry Ford's first book, published in 1914, was called *the White Slaver*. In it he discussed the addictive nature of tobacco.

Leave it to the government and PR firms to make a mess of things. First, the feds gave out free smokes to soldiers in combat, feeling it would steady their nerves. Tobacco companies started hiring PR firms to sell cigarettes to women in the 1920s, wanting to expand that market. Their top campaign was during one of the first Miss America pageants, in which they had the girls walk holding lighted cigarettes up high. The caption read, "America's beauties, holding their little torches of liberty." Makes you want to stand up and salute, doesn't it?

So, smoking has always been thought of as a problem for health, non-smokers have always pushed to get rid of smoking, parents were upset that kids were being targeted over a hundred years ago, and for centuries people have understood that smoking was addictive.

Which takes us back to Rodrigo de Jerez, who sailed with Columbus in 1492. He took tobacco with him back to Europe and for a brief time enjoyed his smoking habit. That is, until one passerby saw smoke billowing out of his nose and mouth while he smiled serenely.

That person ran to the village priest, crying that this man must be in a pact with the devil, as no sane Christian could expel smoke from his body. The Priest contacted the Inquisitors, who in turn imprisoned the hapless voyager for years. And to this day, is there any difference between the Spanish Inquisition and local City Councils? That's what a man gets for smoking where someone else might possibly see it.

43. The Black Legion

Today in America we are faced with many right-wing extremist groups, from paramilitary survivalists to the American Nazis to the remnants of the Klu Klux Klan. And, while we are concerned about their very existence, it is rarely that any such group commits an act of extreme violence against those it seeks to oppress or destroy. But, while we tend to think of the Klu Klux Klan as the most terroristic and violent radical group in our not-too-distant past, they weren't. That honor goes to a nationwide terrorist organization that more than likely you've never heard of: the Black Legion. As one historian recently put it, the Black Legion made the members of the Klan look like a bunch of cream puffs.

To this day no one knows how many people the Black Legion killed, although it is believed to have been in the hundreds in the state of Michigan alone. And the Black Legion was nationwide. Similarly, no one knows how many people were kidnapped and then beaten nearly to death by this group, but more than likely they numbered in the thousands.

Yet you've never heard of the Black Legion, and there's a reason. For in the days of Pretty Boy Floyd, John Dillinger and a nation awash in poverty, no law enforcement agency, not even the federal government, lifted a finger to stop the Black Legion's wave of terror across America.

The Black Legion started out in the mid-1920s as an offshoot of the Ohio Klan. For the first six years their activities seemed to be no better or worse than those of other Klans across the country. 1931 seemed to be the year that the Black Legion turned violent with a vengeance. Of course, like all hate groups, the members of the Black Legion took an oath swearing enmity toward communists, socialists, Jews, Catholics, Blacks, immigrants and anyone suggesting that unions were the future for American Labor. In time, however, the Black Legion targeted anyone that they didn't believe led a morally correct lifestyle. Legion members were often doctors, businessmen, local law-enforcement officials and foremen at factories or public utilities. It is believed they were funded by some of the nation's wealthiest individuals, including Irenee DuPont.

One promise made to those who joined the Black Legion was that they took care of their own: No member would find himself out of work for long. The second promise made was that if you ever left the organization, you would be targeted for death.

For the first few years the Black Legion managed to escape the media's attention. Most of their crimes were simply listed as unsolved murders; in the cases of kidnappings and beatings, victims refused to testify against their attackers for fear of reprisals and death. A typical case might involve a person's getting a job, incidentally beating out someone tied to the Legion. In one case in FBI files, a man in Portland, Oregon, won a job selling magazines. That night he was taken from his home, severely beaten, and told that if he went back to work, he and his family would be killed. The man didn't return to his job the next day, and the Black Legion member got his position.

In Michigan, the Black Legion created the Wayne County Rifle and Pistol Club and the Wolverine Republican Club as fronts for their activities. They killed autoworkers and other factory men who were petitioning for unionization. But nothing was done about it — probably because in Michigan, as in other states, police officers and judges were often members of the Black Legion. It was long rumored that Detroit's District Attorney, Duncan McCrea, was also a member.

By 1934 the media finally picked up on the story of the Black Legion and its terror tactics, and letters by the hundreds suddenly started landing on J. Edgar Hoover's desk at the FBI. The first letters were from those individuals who had once been members of the Black Legion, but had left because they wanted nothing more to do with the violence. According to those individuals, they lived in fear for their lives.

The next group of letters to the FBI director came from ordinary citizens, warning the FBI that the Black Legion had set up local chapters in their towns. Letters also came from people who had been solicited

for membership, but had turned the Legion down. Still others fed the FBI information on crimes in their areas that were classified as unsolved, but in fact had been the work of the Legion. Even Congressmen wrote letters to Hoover, asking him if he knew of the organization or wanting him to open an investigation into the matter and take care of it. Among those who wrote the FBI on Congressional letterhead were Congressmen William Sirovich, Samuel Dickstein and a Texas Congressman, Martin Dies — who, at the time, was chairing what would later become the House Committee on Un-American Activities. Things got so bad in Michigan that Paul Burlew, head of a chapter of the United Auto Workers, pleaded with Hoover to help stop the beatings and murders of his union's local members.

Decades later in the sixties, until he was ordered to do so by his boss, Bobby Kennedy, J. Edgar Hoover would refuse to do anything against any extremist group that targeted minorities, explaining that such matters lay outside the jurisdiction of the FBI. He had done exactly that same thing in the thirties, in the case of the Black Legion.

To Congress he denied that the FBI had done any investigation of the group — which was an out and out lie. The FBI's files show that not only was Hoover aware of the Black Legion and its propensity for violence, but he'd known all this for at least two years before Congress asked him about it.

To those who wrote him letters detailing crimes, or in fear of their lives at the hands of the Black Legion, Hoover's replies were exactly the same. I quote from one of his 1936 letters, "For your information, the jurisdiction of this Bureau is restricted to investigating violations of specific Federal Laws. Inasmuch as the activities of the Black Legion do not appear to indicate any such Federal violation, I regret that no action can be taken by this bureau at the present time."

Hoover then wrote a letter to all heads of his field offices, dictating that under no circumstances were they to do any investigation of the Black Legion. When Congressman Sirovich gave Hoover a letter from a man whose life had been threatened, telling the director that it was covered under the Federal Extortion Act, Hoover replied that he didn't think the threat was credible.

Of course, the FBI could have acted at any time. After the kidnapping and death of Charles Lindberg's son in 1932, Congress passed the Lindberg Act, which gave the FBI full jurisdiction over such matters. Moreover, Hoover had explicit authority to investigate any felony that involved crossing state lines. Yet, in letter after letter, Hoover used the exact same line: "Inasmuch as the activities of the Black Legion do not appear to indicate any such Federal violation, I regret that no action can be taken by this bureau at the present time."

It should be noted that two years earlier, in 1934, the FBI had located and interviewed Dr. Bill Shepard of Ohio along with Bert Effinger, the heads of the Black Legion. Both prosperous and respected citizens, the men didn't deny being the leaders of the terrorist group. But they also said that they were just good Americans, trying to uphold the Constitution in hard times. The FBI was happy with those answers. And Effinger threw in one other thing: 62 members of the Justice Department were also members of the Black Legion.

Shortly thereafter, the state of Michigan asked Hoover to apprehend Effinger on an outstanding fugitive warrant for transporting weapons and explosives across state lines. This should have been covered under the Federal Fugitive Law, the same law that the FBI had used to get Dillinger. But once again, Hoover claimed that having no jurisdiction whatsoever in the matter meant he couldn't be of any help. So the beatings and killings continued.

In 1936, however, Hoover was alerted by numerous letters and by Congress that the Black Legion intended to assassinate the president and install a military dictatorship in this country. Hoover's reply was familiar: "Inasmuch as the activities of the Black Legion do not appear to indicate any such Federal violation, I regret that no action can be taken by this bureau at the present time." He referred the matter to the Secret Service.

But the end of the Black Legion was already at hand, and the end came in Detroit. Charles Poole was a God-fearing family man, an organizer of the Works Progress Administration for Southern Michigan. Apparently he didn't find a job for one member of the Black Legion, who vindictively told his fellow terrorists that Poole was a wife beater, whose wife was currently hospitalized from her husband's last thrashing.

At the end of May, 1936, Charles Poole was kidnapped from his home in the middle of the night. The large group of kidnappers wore black robes with the skull and crossbones on their headgear, the disguise of the Black Legion. Poole was driven to an open field on the southwest side of Detroit and informed of the charges against him. Tied and on the ground, Poole pleaded for his life. He told his kidnappers that their information was wrong: Yes, his wife was in the hospital, but only because she was about to give birth to their third child; he'd never struck her, and he needed to live to take care of his family.

It did no good. The Black Legion had already passed judgment; and slowly, one shot at a time, they executed Charles Poole. The fifth shot was the one that finally killed him. The next morning his wife gave birth to their child.

That killing was front-page news across the nation. Then Duncan McCrea, the District Attorney for Detroit, broke ranks with the Black Legion and swore publicly that he would bring all of Charles Poole's killers to justice. That was a heroic thing to do; it was estimated that Michigan held some 30,000 members of the Black Legion, and McCrea's life was in danger. But within one day, McCrea had found out that the triggerman had been one Dayton Dean, an employee at Detroit Public Lighting.

In the end, 11 members of the Black Legion were convicted and given life sentences; 37 other members received prison terms. Nationwide, the brutal killing of an innocent family man based on a lie caused wealthy individuals to withdraw their financial support for the Black Legion. And slowly but surely, it disappeared from American society; the last FBI files on the group are dated in the mid-forties.

However, the murder of Charles Poole caused many more unsolved murder cases to be reopened, and Black Legion members were prosecuted. One murder case dating back to 1925 was tried in 1938, and again members of the Black Legion were found guilty. In the years that followed Poole's murder, letters started to flood into the FBI offices to help with the investigation. Hoover's replies became even more curt. To Mrs. Ethel Abell of Indianapolis he wrote, "Madam, Acknowledging receipt of your letter dated September 17, 1936. I must advise you that the matters of which you complain do not come within the investigative jurisdiction of this Bureau. For this reason I will be unable to authorize any investigation of this premise."

Today you know the story of Bonnie and Clyde, Pretty Boy Floyd, and even the Barker Gang. Yet somehow, the most vicious terrorist group this country has ever known has been erased from our history. That's because law enforcement usually wouldn't arrest them, and the few times they did judges set the Legionnaires free. It's also been pushed under the rug because J. Edgar Hoover refused to the end to do anything about it. It's because it's such a blight on our history that the story of the Black Legion hasn't been widely told. We've brought it back to life today in memory of Charles Poole.

44. American Terrorists

Terrorism on our homeland isn't new: Citizens have used terrorist actions inside America's borders for the last century. Starting with the Anarchist Bombings in LA and San Francisco, in the period just before the First World War, this in-country terrorism culminated in 1919, when bombs went off in eight American cities. It didn't end there, though.

No, then came the rise of the KKK and its far more insidious offshoot, the Black Legion. By the thirties it was the German American Bund, then the Klan again; most recently, Timothy McVeigh terrorized Oklahoma City. All in all, thousands and thousands of Americans have lost their lives to terrorists who were fellow citizens; and yet, for the most part, this country as a whole had no fear whatsoever of these groups or individuals. We certainly weren't willing to alter our lifestyles or give up our liberties to be protected from these hate-filled, radical fellow Americans.

So why, you may ask, is everyone so willing to let law enforcement handle the terrorists that are homegrown - but not the foreign terrorists?

Let me show you a little something written by a terrorist to his sleeper cells not so very long ago: "We must prepare ourselves in our struggle against so-called Christian civilization and be prepared for guerilla war; we must possess more weapons for our impending war of race against the federal government, an agency of Satan."

Osama bin Laden? No, Sam Bowers, head of the Ku Klux Klan in Mississippi, and he wrote that in 1962. Did you notice that you couldn't tell any difference between Southern-born-and-raised Bowers' language and bin Laden's? Both claimed to be fighting a "so-called Christian civilization," and both perceived the federal government as an agency of Satan.

Within eight years, Bowers would authorize no fewer than 300 acts of vigilantism and terrorism. You may be thinking, "Well, I personally wasn't scared because the Klan didn't attack other white people." That would be wrong: Under Bowers the Klan's old hatred of Jews (and of whites sympathetic to blacks) found expression in "full retribution" for all.

The Klan in America had all but died before the Great War; it owes its revitalization to the success of the movie Birth of a Nation.

Now, Mississippians love to tell anyone who will listen that, before 1960, their state had fewer Klan members than any other Southern state. True, but disingenuous: Mississippi also had the strongest government policies enforcing segregation, and it had plenty of hardcore white citizen councils and corrupt cops.

But things would change in the late fifties. First came the racially motivated murder of a black Chicago teenager, Emmitt Till. The national press covered that trial, and the nation was disgusted. Then in 1959, Mack Charles Parker was lynched in Poplarville; and Governor James Coleman, a moderate, asked the FBI to investigate the crime, fearing another national trial by media if the case wasn't solved quickly.

The FBI's involvement was the trigger that set up the resurgence of the Klan in Mississippi. Quite happy with local law enforcement, Mississippians believed they were losing their state sovereignty when the FBI came in. Again, they liked the way things were; few people were arrested for murders or lynchings and, of the few that were, no one was ever convicted.

So, Sam Bowers declared war on everyone but white supremacists, and our government went to work in Mississippi with the same vigilance toward his group that is currently being used against possible terrorists in this country. It was the start of the infamous COINTELPRO - short for counterintelligence programs; COINTELPRO White Hate was its official title.

The FBI got down and dirty. Much of that seemed to have been the result of Medgar Evans' assassination by Byron La Beckwith in 1963; after all, the FBI had developed both his fingerprints and the positive ballistics tests on his rifle, and yet he was acquitted at trial. Tactics were about to change.

Shortly after Evans' murder, Bowers met with his Klansmen near Raleigh and instructed them to join local police forces and purchase and hide weapons. Knowing that students and activists were coming south to enroll black voters, he ordered his white-sheeted mobsters to find those people breaking any law and, I quote, "then you have the right to kill them."

And in 1964, the killing started in earnest. Three voter rights advocates, mere kids, were gunned down near Philadelphia. The FBI interrogated 1,000 citizens, 850 members of the Klan and, by offering a $30,000 reward, solved the case. However, during that investigation, the FBI found the bodies of two other missing individuals, caught the killers, and got a confession from one - and the local grand jury refused to indict the men.

And things were getting worse. In the first six months of 1964, there were 35 shootings, 30 bombings, 35 church burnings, 80 beatings and six lynchings. Another 14 people had been killed in civil rights-related violence.

Mississippi was under siege by a terrorist organization. And so on September 2, 1964, the FBI implemented COINTELPRO White Hate to neutralize and destroy the Klan.

I should point out that LBJ, who had received death threats, forced J. Edgar Hoover to start the program.

Sgt. Wallace Miller of the Meridian Police Department came in as the first important inside informant. But there would be others. Insiders' tips the bureau received found their way into the media, so the lead members of the Klan would be exposed. The FBI successfully managed to get the Klans fighting amongst themselves, such as the cells in Neshoba and Meridian counties, because one group didn't show up to help the other in a few midnight bombings.

When the houses of Klansmen were searched, it was questionable what the searchers found more of, boxes of grits, guns or dynamite. By 1966, of the 1,500 White Knights of the Ku Klux Klan, 488 had turned government informants.

However, things were still out of hand. There was a gunfight between the feds and Klansmen who were preparing for a cross-burning near Meridian. Sam Bowers, head of the Klan, came up with a new enemy: It wasn't their black population causing all these problems, he said; it was obvious that the Jews had taken over our government, and they were the ones bringing these problems on his lily-white state. So Jews became targets.

Still, the worst abuse yet of the feds in fighting the Klan might have been the case of Thomas Tarrants and Kathy Ainsworth.

Tarrants was only 21, born in Mobile, Alabama, and raised on a steady diet of hate. By the time he was 20 he sincerely believed that the Jews were running the government and that they were pushing integration on the rest of the nation. Inevitably, Tarrants believed, crossbreeding of the races would occur, leaving us genetically inferior and therefore easier for the Jews to control.

As Tarrants later said, "The Klan was my life." That year, 1967, Tarrants was involved in at least five bombings; in September at Jackson's new Beth Israel synagogue; in October the home of the dean of Tougaloo College. In November he helped bomb the houses of a black minister, a civil rights leader and a local rabbi. Tarrants was involved in two shootouts and critically wounded a law officer.

By this time, the Klan was seriously in decline; from a high of 7,000 hardcore members in 1964, only about 500 remained on the active rosters. The FBI knew that if they could just take this 21-year-old Klansman out, it might be the end of the KKK's reign of terror in Mississippi. So, they laid an ambush for Tarrants.

On June 29th, 1968, Tarrants and Kathy Ainsworth, a 26-year-old kindergarten teacher and Klan terrorist, went to bomb the home of another local rabbi. The FBI was lying in wait. When Tarrants approached the home, carrying his dynamite, all hell broke loose. Gunfight erupted from all directions; Tarrants was hit. Kathy Ainsworth, shot in the back, died still sitting in the front seat of the car.

Tarrants was sentenced to 30 years in prison that November. Here's how a Klan website remembers Kathy Ainsworth today: "This noble Aryan woman was a schoolteacher and a Ku Klux Klan activist in Jackson. Acting as a mole, Sister Kathy infiltrated a kike-funded pro-integration group and gave their plans to Klan leaders. In a setup arranged by Jew cowards, Kathy was gunned down while exiting her car. Sister Kathy was only 26 when she was murdered."

For all intents and purposes, the worst days of Klan violence were over, thanks to the FBI. The Klan's remnants in Mississippi and elsewhere changed to what are now known as Christian Patriot groups. That's right, you remember: Timothy McVeigh was a member of the American Christian Patriot Movement.

The FBI, emboldened by the success of Cointelpro White Hate, moved that semi-legal apparatus to destroy other, typically non-violent groups that happened to hold unpopular political opinions. When exposed in the seventies, those other Cointelpro programs would come back to haunt the bureau .

As for Thomas Tarrants, our boy Aryan? He started reading the Bible in prison. Sure, the Klan read Bible verses all the time at meetings, selective verses to prove the white race was superior or that would justify their violent actions. Today we know politicians who do the same thing.

But Tarrants really read the Bible, understood how wrong his hatred had been, asked forgiveness for the lives he'd taken, the bombings, shooting a police officer. And when he was finally released from prison eight years later, he attended the University of Mississippi and later the seminary, and graduated with a Master of Divinity degree.

As Tarrants says today, "I renounced the Klan and racism, and devoted myself to Christ and his teachings of love and peace that he alone can give."

He has been campus minister at George Mason University, is the pastor at Our Shepherd Church in Washington, and has written two books on racial hatred and how Biblical teachings saved him. Not bad at all for a former terrorist bomber.

The FBI often broke the law to break up the worst terrorist group in America 40 years ago, the White Knights of the Ku Klux Klan; sadly, they didn't know when to quit. Worse, none of us cried about the civil rights of those Klan leaders being violated, we just had a problem when those violations happened to us.

But the one person that they targeted for assassination, Thomas Tarrants, survived their ambush. And today he's an inspiration for everyone, proving that hate - even deep-seated, irrational hate - can be overcome.

45. "Mortification of My Flesh"

In recent years lengthy discussions have again been held on the idea of military tribunals for those suspected of being members of Al Qaeda, including holding Jose Padilla without benefit of trial or legal assistance. Moreover, the administration is citing the 1942 Supreme Court case of eight German saboteurs caught here in America as conferring the legal right to do so.

And that sounds like precedent makes it completely legal - until you hear what actually took place in 1942. Moreover, the true story was never told to any American until a Freedom of Information Request revealed the facts of the case in 1980. That's right: For 38 years no one knew the truth about those German spies who landed in America, and no one knew the truth about the FBI's involvement in the case leading up to the Supreme Court decision.

The Germans called it Operation Pastorius; it was Hitler's way of bringing the war to the American homeland. Eight men with explosives, sent here by U-boat to disrupt the war effort and terrorize the American people.

The two U-boats carried four saboteurs each; U-584 left its bunker at Brest first, heading for the Florida coast, and two days later U-202 headed toward New York. It arrived first on June 13th, 1942, off Long Island. The four saboteurs came ashore with their explosives, and the comedy of errors began.

That detachment was led by George Dasch, a German national who had lived in the United States from 1923 to 1939. He'd even served for a year in the U. S. Army and married an American wife. Dasch's objective was to blow up the hydroelectric plant at Niagara Falls and destroy a couple of aluminum factories and the water system for New York, among other things. And Dasch wanted no part of it.

That's right, there on the beach, just off the U-boat, Dasch told the other three men he was going to inform our government about the plot. Dasch also convinced Ernest Burger, who had been born in Germany but had moved to the States and was actually an American citizen, to join him in abandoning the sabotage.

Right about then, along the beach came John Cullen, a sailor in the Coast Guard. Dasch told the suspicious Cullen that the four of them were fishermen who had gotten lost; and he gave Cullen $260 to forget that he'd seen them. Cullen kept the money, but then he ran back to his station to get help.

When the other guardsmen arrived on the scene, Dasch and his men had fled, leaving the explosives sitting on the beach in full view. Burger had decided that the best way to foil the plot was to leave the weapons to be easily found.

Dasch and his boys had already caught the train to New York, where they then split up. And true to his promise hours earlier to expose the plot to authorities, Dasch checked into a hotel room in Manhattan and picked up the phone. He called the office of the FBI and truthfully explained what had happened.

The FBI, in turn, didn't believe a word Dasch was saying. A bunch of Germans had landed here to commit terrorist acts? Hah. They literally blew the guy off. So Dasch caught the next train to Washington, checked into the Mayflower Hotel and called the FBI again. And again, nothing happened.

Dasch then caught a cab, walked into FBI headquarters and again told his story. Not only did he tell everything about their mission, but he also gave up the names of the other men involved and where they were. Dasch told the FBI about the second U-boat landing in Florida; he gave the names of those four men and where they were headed. He disclosed the location of the training camp in Germany where he'd been taught

to use explosives, and eventually he managed to tell authorities much they hadn't known about the operational capabilities of German U-boats. And he turned over the $84,000 the Germans had given him to conduct the operation. Within a couple of days, the FBI had rounded up the remaining seven individuals. All thanks to George Dasch.

But the public never knew that. You see, J. Edgar Hoover announced that this terrorist spy ring had been broken up thanks to the brilliant work of the FBI: No one mentioned that Dasch had turned himself and the others in - not one word. J. Edgar Hoover was given the Medal of Honor for this case, which he claimed was the daring work of the FBI.

Enter our then-Attorney General, Francis Biddle, who wanted to try the men as spies. However, he knew of Hoover's deception, and certainly it would have come out in court that Dasch's information, not the fieldwork of FBI agents, was what got the Germans captured. Biddle also wanted the death penalty for the eight men, something he couldn't have gotten in civilian courts. So President Roosevelt ordered the men tried by a military tribunal. They'd get the death penalty, and no one would have to discredit our newest Medal of Honor winner, J. Edgar Hoover.

There was a problem with that: A Supreme Court ruling from 1866, ex parte Milligan, in which the Supreme Court held that no one could be tried in a military tribunal unless the civilian courts were completely shut down. That decision was based on Lincoln's suspension of habeas corpus during the Civil War.

That's right, and it's what you're not hearing now: The Supreme Court had ruled that military tribunals for these situations were unconstitutional. This from the Court's decision in 1866: "Civil Liberty and this kind of martial law cannot endure together; the antagonism is irreconcilable and, in the conflict, one or the other must perish." The Supreme Court added, "The Constitution will stand equally in war and peace."

Germany protested the military tribunals ordered by Roosevelt, claiming that these eight men were prisoners of war. Their defense attorneys protested, too, so all parties asked for a special session of the Supreme Court to hear the arguments. In doing so, the Court ruled that Roosevelt had the right to order the trial by the military.

But there's another thing you don't hear in the recent arguments: In reaching that decision, the Supreme Court mentioned the Articles of War no fewer than 18 times, finding that Roosevelt did own this power because Congress had declared war on Germany.

Still, the Supreme Court justices felt that they had been railroaded on the issue. In 1953 Felix Frankfurter wrote, "This case did not set a happy precedent." William O. Douglas regretted that the ruling came too quickly, without time for a fully reasoned opinion - meaning no research. And his clerk John Frank later said that in this case, the Court allowed itself to be stampeded.

Chief Justice Harlan Stone went off to write the full opinion of the court at a resort in New Hampshire. As he put it, he then realized the error of the decision in that some of these Germans were actually American citizens and therefore should never have been tried by a military tribunal. But it was too late to reverse the Court's decision; Chief Justice Stone wrote later, "I did the best I could in a dubious situation," adding, "It was my period of the mortification of the flesh."

George Dasch, our German who had exposed the plot to the FBI, was told to walk into that military tribunal and plead guilty. For his help, he was told, President Roosevelt would grant him a presidential pardon quietly a few months later. Ernest Burger, who had also turned himself in, was told he would be treated lightly. All

eight men were sentenced to death. Dasch's sentence was later commuted to 30 years, Burger's to life.

Here's the scorecard: Dasch turned everyone in, only to have J. Edgar Hoover take credit for everything. He was promised a presidential pardon for his contributions; Burger was promised a light sentence for his cooperation. Both were double dealt. The other Germans were executed before the final opinion was even written by the Supreme Court, and at least four of the Court's members realized they'd made the wrong decision in haste.

Oh, and you didn't know that the Supreme Court had already decided this once in 1866, ruling that civil courts are the law of this land, in peacetime or war.

That left the remaining mess to Harry Truman, who found out about it in 1948 from his attorney general, Kenneth Royal. Six years earlier, Royal had been a Colonel and an attorney in the military. And yes, Kenneth Royal had been the defense attorney for the eight German saboteurs; he had mounted their defense, finding the original Supreme Court decision that military tribunals were illegal. Royal never agreed with the Supreme Court's decision, and he knew that Dasch and Burger should be set free. The problem was that if he did the right thing by Dasch and Burger, he would be exposing J. Edgar Hoover as a liar. And Hoover was already furious at Truman's refusal to allow the FBI to railroad people on Communism issues.

Truman came up with a compromise; he pardoned Dasch and Burger, but only if they returned to Germany and never come back again. Which they did.

Besides the justices and politicians involved, no American knew the real story of eight German saboteurs, nor the fact that George Dasch turned himself and everyone else in, until 1980 - when a Freedom of Information Act request finally revealed the truth.

And now you know the whole story of that Supreme Court ruling from World War II on military tribunals. Not quite the story we've heard, is it? Contrary to what we've been led to believe, that decision is certainly not an applicable precedent.

46. Long Before Rove

Today we wonder what our political moves in the Middle East will bring this country and the world. Peace, more terrorism, higher or lower priced oil? Will they give us the ability to control whose economy grows in the future? The fact is that no one knows for sure; anyone who tells you they have all the answers is out of their mind.

Once upon a time, however, there was a reasonable chance for peace in the Middle East. One Texan understood the mess that Britain was creating and, as one of our president's closest political advisors, told him the quagmire he was getting us into. His name was Col. Edward Mandell House.

House, a seventh son of a seventh son, was born in Houston on July 26, 1858. His father, a banker and plantation owner, had fought with General Burleson during the fight for our Republic; as House wrote in 1916, "My father lived long enough to see Mexico become Texas, join the Union, leave the Union and return once again."

Even as a young man, House seems to have been affected by the Civil War, by the lawlessness that hit Houston and his father's successful businesses. He recalled many nights when his father stood protecting his cotton warehouses with a shotgun. In time, after the war, House and most of his brothers joined the Ku Klux Klan. But in those days, Klan membership was something politically active young men did. House would be a lifelong Democrat. He went to college at Cornell, but had to leave before graduation due to his father's death. And, although he inherited wealth, House longed for a career in politics. Not as a candidate, but as a man who made candidates.

House was successful, for it was he who handled the reelection campaign for Governor James S. Hogg in 1892; in return Hogg gave him the honorary title of Colonel. House went on to advise the next two Texas governors.

However, by 1910, House wanted to move on to national politics. Uprooting his family, he moved to New York, where the very next year he was introduced to Woodrow Wilson. The two immediately hit it off, and House was instrumental in getting Wilson elected. Remember, 1912's presidential race was three-way between Wilson, Taft and Roosevelt. It was House who managed to get William Jennings Bryan's support for Wilson, insuring his landslide election. Wilson then allowed House to help pick his cabinet, which is why it included three Texans. And for the next seven years, Col. Edward Mandell House was Wilson's closest friend and chief political advisor.

In fact, in both 1915 and 1916, it was House that Wilson sent to Europe to try to negotiate peace between the warring parties. He failed, and the war dragged on. Still, by 1917 it was almost imperative that America enter the war. There was just one problem; anti-imperialism in America was still high, a political reality left over from the Spanish American War and the Filipino Insurrection. Wilson's public persona was that of a man of peace, and his public platform was self-determination for all mankind within their political boundaries. Remember, once we entered that war, our battle cry was that we were "making the world safe for democracy."

That wasn't necessarily true. Wilson, a supremacist, had no intention of forcing countries to abandon the colonies they already had; he just didn't want them to have any more. But, say we entered the war positioned as an enlightened people trying to set the poor and downtrodden free. If, after the war ended, said downtrodden folks found out that secret agreements had long been made that would further our allies' colonial aims, we'd look like nothing more than a bunch of hypocrites.

Wisely, then, House and Wilson told the British that before America entered that war, Britain would have to come clean: The Allies had to disclose all previously negotiated treaties they had made as to any territorial acquisitions they planned to keep after the conflict. As it turned out, the British, French, Russians and many Arab factions had agreed to so many treaties that the disclosures fairly flooded Washington. Their agreements planned the new world order they would have helped put in place once Germany and the Ottoman Empire had been defeated.

One such document produced for Washington, the Sykes Picot Treaty, divvied up the Middle East. This is an important point: When he read that treaty, Col. House told the President that its implementation would begin a series of non-stop wars in the Middle East that would never end. Writing to British Foreign Secretary Arthur Balfour about this deceptive agreement, House asserted, "It is all bad, you are doing nothing more than making the Middle East a breeding place for future wars." That's right, back in 1917 one perceptive Texan accurately foretold how those countries' future would look.

Meanwhile, behind the scenes, although both England and France had agreed to who got what, Prime Minister Lloyd George was doing everything he could to screw France out of any of the treaty's promised lands. House was stunned; he more than anyone seemed to understand Britain's duplicity - Albion's perfidy. House then went to work helping Wilson draft his 14 Points. See if this sounds familiar: Wilson made sure to underscore the point that he was fighting governments, not the people they enslaved. Point Twelve of his declaration stated that the Middle East should not be divided among the belligerent powers. And that those ruled by the Ottoman Empire should become autonomous once the fighting ended.

In September of 1917, House assembled a committee to formulate America's plans for a postwar world, code-named the Inquiry. Part of the study gave credence to the fact that, to protect its colonies in Asia, England wanted to control a solid line of countries from Egypt to India in the Middle East. Knowing Lloyd George's game plan, House wrote to Wilson, "The English naturally want the road to Egypt and India blocked, and the Prime Minister is not above using us to further this plan."

Wilson, his political career on the line, held to his high vision for the new world. House would travel with him to the Paris Peace Conference after the war; House would be our spokesperson and negotiator when Wilson was absent. He was disgusted with the proceedings, writing, "People and provinces were indeed bartered about from sovereignty to sovereignty, as if they were chattels or pawns in a game."

Now, here's what really happened. The British did want the Middle East to complete their empire from Egypt to India. They didn't want the French to have Syria, as they didn't trust the French army in the northern regions.

England had already come up with the lunatic plan to move the Muslim Caliph from Constantinople to Mecca; that's why the British aligned with the Emir of Medina and Mecca, Sharif Hussein, in fighting the Turks. The British believed that if they had the ultimate Muslim religious leader in their back pocket, and the center of their religious fatwas were moved to Arabia, then that Arab group would be the stabilizing force for the entire region. And favor the British. Sound familiar?

Gets better: Hussein was the sworn enemy of the Wahhabi, a fundamentalist group of warriors that also allied with the British. You know this extreme sect as the breeding ground for most of the 9/11 hijackers. Now, here's what you didn't know: The leader of that Wahhabi tribe was Ibn Saud. As in Saud-dee Arabia. There's your connection. Today's Royal Family in Saudi Arabia continues to protect the Wahhabi in their country for a good if hidden reason: They're kin.

And guess who made that mess for us? The British, because they gave that region to the Wahhabi, double-dealing Hussein because they believed that his violent sect was in decline and would be manageable. Sharif Hussein, the Emir of Medina and Mecca, had to settle for something else. He had three sons, Faisal, Ali and Abdullah.

Faisal, an Arab, would be forced on the French to run Syria; they'd throw him out shortly thereafter, and the British would install him as King of Iraq. Abdullah would be given Transjordan, today just Jordan.
Even then, though, there was a problem with the Palestinian region. It had been promised both to the Arabs and, by the Balfour Declaration, to the world's Jews as their future homeland. Colonel House knew the British had double-dealt both the Palestinians and the Jews and foresaw trouble forever on that deal also. Here's what you didn't know: At the Peace Conference, the British tried to force the Palestinian Mandate on America. That's right, they just wanted to wash their hands of that one by putting us in charge of that region.

Mark Sykes, the young politician who had drawn up all these plans secretly during the war, was spared his share of guilt in this underhanded back-stabbing. He wisely died of the Spanish Influenza during the conference.

The British promised the Kurds their own country, then reneged and bombed them for an uprising demanding their rights. Saudi Arabia was given to the Wahhabi sect under Ibn Saud. Faisal was dumped on the French in Syria and then put in as a British puppet King in Iraq; and House and Wilson came up with the most brilliant plan of all.

Send representatives into the Middle East and ask the people, the average citizens, how they wanted to set up their own governments and draw their own national boundaries. The British very cleverly brought forth only those who agreed with the British partition. House finally told Wilson it was time to compromise; they were getting nowhere.

America turned down the responsibility for the Palestinian region. On the other hand, Wilson became furious with his best friend Col. Edward House, who told him that he'd been had and Congress would never approve anything as deceptive as this as a basis for the League of Nations. Further, House reiterated his position that, based on the British plans, war would be the continuous state of affairs in the Middle East. Wilson sent House home and never spoke to him again.

House was right. Congress turned down Wilson's plans. The British enforced their arbitrary boundaries for Middle Eastern countries; and wars have been continuous and the fight between Israel and Palestine continues to this day.

The Saudi Wahhabi gave Al Qaeda their recruits. The Baath political party was formed to overthrow Faisal's son in Iraq in the late fifties. Syria hates the west; the Kurds still want a country. Persia got a pro-West leader and became Iran, and you know what happened there.

Britain spun Kuwait out of Iraq, and twice Iraq has fought to get that country back. Once in 1961, although everyone seems to have forgotten that fight.
Wilson stood firm on fairness for the Middle East and was crushed by Congress and the duplicity of the British Prime Minister. But there was once a time when a former Klansman from Texas, Col. Edward House,

was the most influential advisor to the president, saw through the deception and knew how to bring peace to the Middle East. And no one listened.

Eighty-four years later, the wars continue. Eighty-four years later, no one is listening still to the words and wisdom of Colonel Edward Mandell House.

47. Empires Lost

If a history book written 100 years in the future were brought back through time, we might read in it something like this: “If a man were called to fix the period in the history of the world when the condition of the human race was at its most happy and prosperous, and the empire fell, which period would it be?”
In such a history book from the future, here’s how one great and wealthy nation fell. We know because in its end days, one of its citizens wrote this and left it behind.

“The middle class of people were squeezed out of existence, due to ever increasing taxes in order to maintain roads, public works and welfare, and for an ever stronger military to protect their assets both at home and abroad. Farmers also lost their existence, finding it impossible to make a living growing and selling crops.
“Yet in this time of prosperity for virtually everyone, a time like nothing the world had never known before, more poor people than ever came to depend on the nation to provide for their most basic needs.

“There were demands on the local cities to build more highways and better water systems, demands that municipalities spend their taxpayers’ money to build more and more stadiums, so the populace could have its sports and be entertained. The citizens, once voracious readers, rarely borrowed a book from their libraries anymore.

“A populace that had once known true political freedom threw it all away in order to feel security in their world — the security to enjoy their material goods.
“A radical religion and its followers were flooding out of the Middle East, trying to destroy this nation’s belief in its deity; and at the earth’s far corners, terrorist attacks against the nation became virtually constant. Ever more taxes were funneled into military forces that had to keep growing, though in time even the world’s largest military force couldn’t stop attacks growing daily in volume and ferocity.
“And that nation fell from greatness, never to rise again.”

Sound familiar? It should, but I’m not talking about America, I’m paraphrasing from the book, The Rise and Fall of the Roman Empire. That radical religion coming out of the Middle East was not the Islamic faith, it was Christianity — and the terrorists attacking the Empire included the Jewish Zealots to the east, the German barbarians to the north and the Scots in Britain. Hence the reason Rome built Hadrian’s Wall — to keep the Scots off their backs in England.

This isn’t strictly a story about American history, but maybe you’ll agree that it’s related. I went looking for the world’s former empires, powerful nations, each in its time the superpower that America is today, to find out exactly why they crumbled. Here’s the scary part: It’s virtually the same story, every time. The empire’s name doesn’t matter. In the Roman Empire, Ottoman Empire, Byzantine, French, Spanish, Russian and, most recently, the British Empire, the basics are virtually the same.

Along the way, I found a few surprises. This was one: Which empire was the world’s most powerful in the 16th century? That’s right, during the same period as the original colonies in America — which were Spanish, by the way. Most would probably would have said the British Empire. But I would have been wrong: It was the Ottoman, and it had spread across much of Eastern Europe by then, although the Moors had been defeated in Spain by that time. The Ottoman Empire was the first to stay popular by determining which policies were being taken well and which ones it should soft-pedal ... by polling the public.

And another surprise. Are you of a Protestant faith? Well, if you haven’t hugged a Muslim today, you should. According to scholars of history, if it hadn’t been for the Muslim conquest of many parts of Europe, we’d all be Catholic. Why? Because the Catholic Church was the avowed enemy of the Ottoman Muslims. At that same time, the Protestant religions were breaking away from the Church’s corruption, cruelty and endless greed. And it was the Ottoman Empire’s money with which new countries, primarily made up of anyone who wouldn’t kiss the Pope’s ring, stayed alive long enough to become self-supporting. Many historians believe

that our separatist Christian faiths couldn't have survived with the protection and financial backing of the Ottomans. This early form of foreign aid kept a potentially hostile country — and the enemy of your enemy — on your side.

Of course, the Ottoman Empire fell, but it lasted until the end of the First World War, when the Allies defeated the Turks in the desert. And yes, the Muslims in Bosnia that we protect today are the last remnants of the Ottomans. That enlightened empire — which once ruled European capitals, controlled most of the world's trade lanes and enjoyed unimaginable wealth — fell just like the Romans, for the same reasons; they just took longer to do it. Again, it was uprisings at the far corners of their empire. While they never recovered, today they are a member of NATO.

As I recall, it was terrorist attacks against the Spanish in the Carribean and the Philippines that drained that country's treasuries; we finished off the Spanish Empire just 104 years ago. By the way, most history books don't use the term "terrorist attack" to define battles against empires. History recalls those incidents as peasant uprisings, or guerilla warfare. Same thing.

While I don't want to say that what I've uncovered is the entire story — it will take a year to digest it all — it is amazing that there are so many commonalities to the end of days for each one of those empires. Great wealth for the nation, ever larger militaries to protect that wealth, a formerly well read and informed population grown apathetic, demanding to be entertained. A swollen government growing ever larger, spawning a bloated bureaucracy, and the public demanding that the state do more and more for citizens. And finally, attacks against the empire in which the public surrenders political freedoms and civil rights in return for promised security — culminating in crushing debt, caused by over-taxation to meet all the empire's citizens' demands.

Yes, at the height of all those problems, peasants — terrorists, today — attack the empires at their most far-flung, most difficult to defend locations around the globe. And those attacks become relentless. Scary, huh?

The Jews, Scots and Germans fight the Romans; the Spanish and Italians, among others the Ottomans; Kenyans, Indians and South Africans take on Britain, which loses her colonies. Spain gets run out of the New World, Peter the Great's Russia collapses, France loses all of its colonies — well, you get the idea.
It should also be pointed out that most of these empires' military forces did well when confronted by another nation's armies. But against peasants who'd had enough of a foreign power's telling them what to do, they didn't fare so well.

I have no conclusions today on this story. It's merely a cautionary observation taken from history. One that no one else has brought up to you, so I thought I would.

But I will bring up one last point: These empires fell because the hardliners in each of their societies were given free reign — but it wasn't the hardliners' fault they went too far. Nor was it the fault of the intellectuals, or liberals as we call them today. It seems that often it happened when the voice of the moderates, all those many in the middle, fell silent — when they forced little, if any, debate to take place on what to do. And that may be the real reason that great empires have so consistently fallen throughout history: The voice of the average man was silenced — by the average man himself.

48. Fun and Games with the Middle East

Each week we become more aware of the unsettling problems in the Middle East, and we wonder how are we going to resolve the crisis. In order to understand how our relationship with that region of the world deteriorated so badly, it might be best to go back to the beginning of America's relationship with those countries.

It started with our joining the Allied Forces during the Second World War. Before that, for the most part, the Middle East was always in a three-way tug of war, over-lorded by Britain, France and Russia. But Franklin Roosevelt's policies differed from those Woodrow Wilson had held in the Great War; Roosevelt firmly believed in making the world safe for democracy. And to that end, he was firmly committed to ending his Allied partners' Colonialism by war's end.

Iraq's King Faisal the Second agreed with Roosevelt that the Middle East should be freed of its colonial masters. When Roosevelt publicly stated in 1943, "This will be my criterion for the relations of the United States toward all nations which are now suffering from the evils of greedy minorities, monopolies, aggression and imperialism," the Arab states cheered.

So Roosevelt sent General Patrick J. Hurley to Iran and Afghanistan, where he would determine how to make them fully independent after the conflict was over. Hurley drew up what is known as the Declaration Regarding Iran; over Averill Harriman's objections, Roosevelt signed it and presented it to Churchill and Stalin at the Teheran Conference in late '43. Roosevelt said then, "I was rather thrilled by the idea of using Iran as an example of what we could do by an unselfish American policy."

The plan was slammed by our own State Department, which in an internal memo called the Declaration a "hysterical, messianic global piece of baloney."

Then in April of 1945, King Ibn Saud of Saudi Arabia, who had just aligned his country's oil interests with ours, asked Roosevelt about the Jewish situation in Israel. On April 5, 1945, Roosevelt wrote to Saud, "Your Majesty will recall that during our recent conversation I assured you that I would take no action, in my capacity as Chief Executive, which might prove hostile to the Arab people."

Seven days later, Roosevelt was dead, and American foreign policy toward the Middle East changed forever.

Now, it should be pointed out that at that time, the entire Middle East saw America as their liberators from Colonial rule, much the same way we were seen as having liberated those countries under Nazi rule. England and France couldn't complain; we were saving them too.

Let's fast forward to 1953; Eisenhower came into office and Persia had a popularly elected Prime Minister, Dr. Mohammed Mossadegh. Now, Dr, Mossadegh, though an Arab nationalist, was not totally unfriendly to either America or Russia - and we saw that as a problem.

Moreover, Mossadegh nationalized British Petroleum's holdings in Iran, although his terms were fair. BP would receive 25% of all net profits from the sale of the oil; Iran would guarantee the oil's safe delivery to the market, the safety of all BP employees in Iran, and the continued employment of their staff. This arrangement wasn't seen as quite so friendly by England or our government. John Foster Dulles, Eisenhower's Secretary of State, told the president in June of 1953, "So this is how we get rid of that madman Mossadegh."

And with that, the CIA's Kermit Roosevelt, grandson of Theodore Roosevelt, convinced the Shah of Iran to oust his Prime Minister and seize control of his country. The Shah resisted. But uprisings in the streets, riots started by the British and our CIA, forced the Shah to use his army to quell the pseudo-unrest and take control. One thing should not be forgotten: The Shah violated his country's constitution when he ousted the very popular Mossadegh, and the people of Iran would never forget or forgive that.

Three years later, the next great Arab nationalist, Gamal Nasser of Egypt, ended the 72-year British occupation of his country and nationalized the Suez Canal. This brought on operation Musketeer, named for the three parties that were going to war to win the canal back: England, France and Israel. And yes, they wanted us to join the fight.

Now, Eisenhower didn't care for Nasser, but a number of things kept him from putting us into the battle. It was an election year; his legal advisors told him that Egypt had the legal right to the canal's ownership; and Ike thought direct military action against an Arab state would turn Middle Easterners into anti-Americans. So Ike sat it out. Later he called this action "the shortest and possibly silliest war in history."

The battle for the Suez Canal marked the end of both British and French Imperialism there forever, and it aligned Israel with the West.

And it was in that same year, 1956, that a young Saddam Hussein joined the Bath political party. That year Hussein and others tried to overthrow King Faisal the Second, but the coup failed, and Hussein went into exile. Seven years later Hussein would graduate from the College of Law in Cairo. Maybe that's why Americans hate Saddam Hussein so much: He's an attorney.

In 1972, back home, Hussein did the same thing in Iraq that Mossadegh had done in Iran with his country's oil companies; he nationalized them.

So, now the players are all in place. Britain and France have lost their final grasp on their foreign

empires due to their defeat at Nasser's hands in Egypt - in the process, showing the Middle East that wars against the West can be won. Hussein, law degree in hand, nationalizes Iraq's oil; the Shah is both hated at home and closely aligned with America. And, with Colonialism out of the Middle Eastern picture, Arabs now see themselves as their own masters.

Saudi Arabia, it should be remembered, is a close ally, still clutching Roosevelt's 1945 letter promising our friendship. More to the point, the Saud family still rules. Here's where it falls apart. In the late seventies, when the Shah of Iran becomes more an ally of OPEC than of America, we decide we have little more use for him. It's at precisely that moment that the world finds out about his SAVAK secret police and hears how the Shah has put down violently any threat to his throne. The people of Iran, believing him to be an American puppet and still furious that he threw democracy out of their country, seize our embassy there in 1979 and start the Islamic Fundamentalist Revolution, forever distancing themselves from Western control.

Russia chooses that moment to invade Afghanistan. The ongoing Cold War makes this a problem for us, but we can't let that become apparent. So we bring deeply religious Arab nationalists into Afghanistan to fight the Godless Russians. One of those ferried into the war is a young Osama Bin Laden.

Now, Russia didn't really want to get into a pitched battle with Arab nationalists; if it didn't, however, that region's alliance with the West might get stronger. If nothing else, Russia wanted Afghanistan as a buffer zone for its southern coast.

Back to Iraq. Livid about the events in Iran, we back Saddam Hussein in his eight-year war with Iran, a battle that originally started over a land dispute for the Shatt al Arab River basin.

Then, in March of 1986, Ronald Reagan signs National Security Directive 166, authorizing stepped-up aid for the rebels fighting against the Russians in Afghanistan. Because we have to appear neutral, aid and weapons are funneled to the mujahedeen, the Taliban and Bin Laden's fighters through the Pakistani intelligence group, the ISI. The directive to the warriors, given along with the monies and war materiel, is this: The rebels are to be convinced that they are justified in waging an Islamic Jihad against the atheistic Russians and destroying the Soviet Union.

And now you know how we knew their battle plans against us so quickly. We simply reread the instructions we gave them when they fought the Russians.

My, what a tangled web we weave.

Here's the scorecard now. Hussein and Bin Laden both believe that they were responsible for winning their respective wars. Both are heroes in their own countries. The Pakistani ISI and our operatives have a close relationship because of Afghanistan. Then comes Desert Storm, fought because Hussein believed we backed him in his first land grab with Iran and would do the same for the disputed territory in Kuwait. And in Kuwait, Bin Laden is infuriated because the Royal Family denies him the right to protect his home country, opting instead for our protection. And there you have it: The ultimate case of blowback. From Iran, to Hussein to Bin Laden, to the ISI in Pakistan and their friends, the Taliban. And our government knew the whole story quickly, once the attacks happened, because we were there for each and every step in the careers of these nefarious characters.

And the entire house of cards started going up in 1953, when Kermit Roosevelt overthrew the Prime Minister of Iran and Nasser defeated the British and French.

So, why do we have problems in the Middle East today? Because 50 years ago, at the end of the Second World War, they saw America as their liberators from the British, Russians and French. Today they believe that the USA simply moved in to fill the void left by the powers that we helped throw out. And that's the short history of our problems in the Middle East.

49. They Called Us “UnAmerican”?

In early 2002 we learned the Bush Administration’s latest tactic in its war on terrorism: Deputizing untold millions of Americans to spy on everyone else. Of course the Administration put a positive spin on things: ‘It’s all volunteer work and intended for checking up on individuals in public places.’ Only that isn’t true.

Police officers handle potential problems in public places. Bush, on the other hand, wants to employ postal workers, along with those in utility industries such as gas, water, electric and telephone employees. In other words, he wants “checking up” done by people who have direct access to our homes — not access to us in public places. The statistical likelihood for the potential of abuse is 100%.

Possibly it would be good to remind everyone that there was once another time in American history in which the mentality of “us versus them” ran amok. That time, Congress created the House Committee on Un-American Activities, which proceeded to discover enemies of the state lurking everywhere.

Ultimately, it caught few of the people who were actually guilty of crimes against the American people. It tried thousands of innocent individuals, however, in public committee hearings, and it ruined them — professionally, socially and privately. Moreover, as we later discovered, the individuals who were doing the most harm to us as a nation too often were the ones supposed to be protecting us.

Let’s start off with the McCormack Dickstein Committee, the forerunner of the House Committee on Un-American Activities. New York State representative Samuel Dickstein, that committee’s co-chair, believed that two things were more important than anything else during the Great Depression: Helping European Jews emigrate to this country, and rooting out all things fascist in America. To that end, Dickstein made it his personal crusade to stamp out anything that didn’t conform to his vision of the United States.

Long before Joseph McCarthy, Dickstein was known as the man who could destroy lives, for no other reason than that he disagreed with the victim’s ideology. There was just one thing no one suspected. Dickstein, we now know, was a Soviet agent — code named “Crook” by the Russians because he constantly demanded more money for passing on America’s secrets.

That’s right, the man who started the twentieth century’s version of the Salem witch hunts, the Congressional Representative from New York, was a Communist agent.

And how about Duncan Lee? A direct descendant of Robert E. Lee, Duncan was an aide — no, a trusted aide — to William J. Donovan, head of the wartime OSS. Yes, another Soviet agent, it turns out.

Laurence Duggan, personal advisor on Latin American Affairs for Secretary of State Cordell Hull, sent the Soviets intelligence on all matters pertaining to fascist movements and American reactions in Latin America. When his deceptions became known in the late ’40s, Duggan committed suicide.

Michael Straight: The personal family friend of President Roosevelt’s, and a state department employee, he kept the Russians supplied with current intelligence on armaments purchases and the recruitment of American spies.

Certainly, you remember the case of Julius and Ethel Rosenberg. But do you remember how they got the information on our atomic weapons program? From Ethel’s brother, David Greenglass, who happened to be serving in the Army at Los Alamos. Klaus Fuchs, a British nuclear scientist working directly on the project, also passed on vital bomb data to the Russians.

Now, among these Congressmen, state department employees, friends of the President and men in uniform, which one would have been caught spying for our enemy by, say —their telephone repairman. Or by the guy who read their gas meter? Exactly: none.

Now, while these well placed and trusted Americans were aiding and comforting our enemies, the McCormack Dickstein Committee had evolved into the House Committee on Un-American Activities. The new committee had the same goal: to create demons where they didn’t exist and, in the process, destroy as many lives as possible — to demonstrate the Committee’s vigilance on behalf of the interests of the American public.

Now, before you think, "Wait, that committee did a lot of good," know that its paranoia infected and involved so many that the Catholic Church's monthly publication objected. In print it said that the first thing that committee needed to do was investigate themselves, and if they did, they would have to disband and serve jail sentences. For they were trampling our Constitution — an act that was itself Un-American.

Roosevelt's Vice President, Henry Wallace, said, "If we were at peace, these tactics might be overlooked as a product of a witchcraft mind. As a matter of fact, the effect on our morale would be much less damaging if Congressman Dies were on Hitler's payroll." The American public revolted against this committee.

Martin Dies, a Texas Congressman, then head of the group, announced that he would not run for reelection; three other members of the House on Un-American Activities Committee were voted out of office. However, Mississippi Congressman John Rankin fought and managed to keep the committee alive.

Keep in mind, this was the same John Rankin who got a bill passed that kept our men in uniform from voting in 1944. Our servicemen sent him a German Iron Cross as their little personal thank-you.

It was Rankin who once said, "The international financiers, largely Jews, own or control the gold supply of the world; they are now crucifying civilization on a cross of gold. The world is now reaping what the Jews have sowed, a whirlwind of destruction."

Rankin, immediately after the war, took the Committee on Un-American Activities to a whole new level. The testimony of ex-diplomat William Bullit, given before Congress in 1946, will illustrate the point; as this passage contains vulgarity, it is not for children or the faint of heart.

Rankin: "Is it true that they eat human bodies there in Russia?"
Bullit: "I did see a photo of a skeleton of a child eaten by his parents."
Rankin: "Then they are just like human slaves?"
Bullit: "Yes."
Rankin: "You said before that sixty percent of the Communist Party here are aliens. Now what percentage of these aliens are Jews? Is it true, Mr. Bullitt, that the Communists have gone into our Southern states and picked up niggers and sent them to Moscow to study revolution? Are you aware they teach our niggers to blow up bridges?"

You get the point; the testimony goes downhill from there.

Once you study history, and put today's solutions to our problems to previous incidents, they rarely hold up. Our problems today are more than likely as overblown, or at least overstated, as the Communist problems were fifty years ago. Yes, there were spies, but for the most part, they weren't the people convicted. No, the spies were people we trusted. And frankly, I don't know of any case study of a black in the '40s or '50s committing terrorist attacks against America, as Congressman Rankin suggested. I do, however, know of many cases of acts of terrorism committed against blacks in Rankin's home state of Mississippi during that period.

I for one always urge caution when national hysteria, promoted by Washington, overtakes the nation. Simply because our history shows that not once in cases like this has the threat ever been as great as the rhetoric. Moreover, history shows us that the people who did the most harm to America haven't been the so-called enemy or those labeled the villains; it's been those we trusted — those who claimed to be saving us from evil — who delivered us into it.

No, the latest plan — to encourage a million Americans to spy on everyone else — will simply be another convenient platform, empowering abuse and making personal vendettas inevitable. And it wouldn't have caught any of the 19 who committed the acts of 9/11.

National paranoia isn't a sign of strength, it's one of weakness. And we are all much stronger than that. History has proven that, too.

50. American Family Values

Today's the day we tackle head-on changing family values here in America. After all, if the religious right is correct, problem children, high divorce rates and marital infidelity are all tied to the fact that somehow or another this country has lost its moral compass.

Let's start off with women in the workplace today. In the debate over whether a mother should turn loose the raising of her children to satisfy her own career, the Anti side says that this is a major cause of the modern American family's meltdown.
Sounds logical, until you realize that in Colonial America, child raising wasn't even the woman's job. No, bringing up kids was primarily the task of the father.

First, children in Colonial times weren't thought of as children; they were believed to be little adults. Therefore, the typically sterner father was considered the smarter choice for child rearing.

Additionally, times were tough in America in those early days. Children were forced to work side by side with their fathers if the family was to survive financially. What's more, that statement remained true through the end of the last century. Whether a father was a farmer or blacksmith, his children almost always were brought into the family business at a very young age, and they were needed to help out with the chores. Playthings were considered an unnecessary luxury. Not one portrait of a child painted before the Revolution depicts any items such as toys or books. Moreover, none of the children are smiling.

A couple of other points: Puritan clergy often preached that parents should not become too attached to their children. Teenage boys were either sent off to find work or sent to live with other families in apprentice programs. Child-rearing manuals weren't even addressed to women until the early 1800s. It wasn't until the mid-1800s that Americans first celebrated our children's birthdays.

Just as bad as the way children were treated was our treatment of the elderly. In early Colonial times, our elders were treated with the utmost respect, maybe because so few people lived long enough to become elders. But, shortly after our Revolution, something changed. Kids treated elderly people much the same way as the worst children treat adults today. The head of Virginia's Carter clan wrote of his angry son in this period, "Surely it is happy our laws prevent parricide. Or the devil that moves to this treatment would move to put his father out of the way. Good God, that such a monster is descended from my loins."
Ever heard the terms "old goat," "geezer," or "baldy"? All came into the American language to describe the elderly within a decade of the American Revolution.

Rising divorce rates continue to star in modern headlines. Again, this is considered a prime factor in the problems with children today. Well, we've been worried about the high divorce rate since the 1880s, when already America racked up 25,000 divorces a year. And in 1880, as it is today, our divorce rate was the highest of any industrialized country.

In case you wanted to know, in the 1920s, adjusted for the size of the population and expressed as a percentage, there were almost as many divorces as today. And that only covers divorces that were handled by the courts: Desertion was more commonly how men unloaded a wife and child or women got out of a bad marriage. They simply walked out and never came back. Moreover, when you study the historical records for divorce rates in this country, those figures don't include desertions. Yet desertion was far more common than legally recognized divorce.

We know why divorce figures jumped starting in the 1880s: Women started getting their freedoms. They no longer had to live out their lives in abusive marriages. And that's the dark secret that no one ever discusses when our so-called soaring divorce rates are brought to light. Some marriages need to end - to preserve the remaining mental and physical health of the woman or the children. What, is it better that they stick around and be abused so the media can say more marriages are staying together?

There's one other factor that did hold the divorce rate down in the past: Marriage is more popular today. It's a fact: Just a little more than a century ago, 10% of the population never married at all. And if you don't marry, you can't get divorced. Moreover, in Massachusetts in the late 1800s, fully 18% of the women 50 years of age or older had never taken the vows with anyone.

Of course, divorce rates have gone up and down with the decades. High in the twenties, the rate dropped during the Depression. It was nearly non-existent during the Second World War, but there was a reason for that, too: Congress passed a law making it illegal for a woman to divorce her husband without his permission if he was serving in the military. The idea, of course, was to give a man the opportunity, once his tour of duty ended, of saving his marriage.

Like all congressional laws, this one stayed on the books a little too long. A year after I was born, my mother left my father and filed for divorce. It was 1954; Dad simply invoked that law, passed during World War Two, forbidding women to divorce military husbands without their permission. With an emergency leave from his base commander, he went home and saved the marriage. But you do have to wonder; if that law hadn't been passed, how many marriages would have ended in divorce during the war years?

Divorce went down in the fifties and back up in the sixties. But, overall, married people have been leaving each other for centuries.

Although we've mentioned it before, today every sociologist screams that single-parent families are destroying the next generation of our youth. Of course, this again is blamed on our high divorce rate. But children in America have always been raised in single-family homes - not because of divorce, but because one parent died. The result is the same: One parent raising the children alone, often without a sufficient income.

In the late 1600s in Virginia, where the records were best kept, by far most of the children had only one parent during part of their early years. Fully three out of every 10 children lost both parents to premature death. Carl Dengler at Stanford University has said that, all things considered, the percentage of children being raised by single parents is not much different today than it was 200 years ago.

Still, we all want to live in a Leave It to Beaver world: Ward working hard, June always beautifully groomed in pearls, hose and heels, and dinner always ready just on time. And when Beaver and Wally get in trouble, it's always something innocuous. It's never something like Wally bought an Uzi to wipe out Lumpy and his gang for taking over his crack business at the high school. Beaver never took an AK47 to school to pay back the kids who smeared ice cream on his new shirt.

No, we like those Norman Rockwell paintings of Americana. And somehow Mr. Rockwell never got around to painting "Woman throwing her husband's clothes into the front yard and setting fire to them." That would have made a good illustration for the Saturday Evening Post's year? cover story on divorce.

Most people are still moral, and little has changed about marriage - or divorce - in America. Child-rearing has gone from being the task of the stern parent to that of the nurturing one, but roughly the same percentage of children grow up now with only one parent as in America's harsh early years. Education has certainly changed - but that's another story.

51. Christmas in America

Now that Christmas time is once again upon us, it might be worthwhile to examine the holiday and what it meant to our ancestors in this country - which was absolutely nothing for hundreds of years. In fact, in the beginning, it was illegal even to acknowledge Christmas in America: It took too much time away from work.

It's true. The Massachusetts Bay Colony banned both the Christmas Holiday and the event's inherently celebratory nature in 1659. In fact, if you or your family were caught in the holiday spirit, you would be punished for it. The actual law read that anybody who was "found observing it, by abstinence from labor, feasting or any other way," would be "punished to a degree established by the Council."

As with most laws, this one came into being because someone perceived harm without it: In 1659 the colonies were barely surviving, hanging on by a fragile thread. Anyone who willfully did less than his full share to ensure the colony's success just wasn't tolerated very well.

Twenty-five years later, when the colony was better established, the law forbidding the celebration of Christmas was taken off the books. But, after the holiday had been banned for a whole generation, not many people celebrated it, in spite of the fact that they could now do so legally. Even as late as 1685, Judge Samuel Sewall wrote gleefully in his legal diary that he hadn't noticed one person that year celebrating Christmas. Well, maybe he just didn't get invited.

In fact, as late as 1841, if you looked through the pages of the New York Tribune for that year, you'd find not one ad, not one story that mentioned Christmas or even gave the occasion a religious spin in print. However, by then the idea of Christmas had at least started in this country. All thanks to Saint A. Claus.

Santa Claus himself is the real magic of Christmas today. The celebration surrounding that "jolly old elf" is actually a mixture and adaptation of many different cultures' ways of marking the holidays. According to Christian history from the 4th century he was really St. Nicholas of Myra - the Bishop of Myra, in what is now Turkey. Born to a wealthy family, legend says, he took pity on three poor girls and bought them presents one year. It was also said that he once stopped a storm at sea to save three sailors, and that he threw his inherited wealth down the chimneys of his town's poorest people. From that tradition we get the one of hanging stockings on the fireplace mantel: According to legend, it was stockings being dried near a fireplace that caught the gold coins dropped by Saint Nicholas.

Here's the bad news. It looks like this story is nothing more than a myth created by the church. For no historian has ever found a record of a Bishop Nicholas in Myra during this period. It is believed that Turkey's "Saint Nicholas" combined the attributes of the Greek god Poseidon and the German god Nickar. One saved sailors; the other gave gifts to the poor.

Five hundred years later, when the Vikings invaded Europe in the 9th century, they brought their own tradition, laid down by their God Odin, of giving small gifts during the winter months. The custom eased the stresses induced by their land's harsh climate.

Now, you already know part of this story, you just didn't know where it came from. The Viking God Odin had 12 children, one for each month of the year. His twelfth child, a daughter, represented December, or Jultid (Yool-ted), in the Vikings' language. Odin's daughter's name was Yalka, or Jule (Yool). December, or Jultid, the Viking name was Anglicized by the British as Yuletide.

So, we have the Vikings bringing their winter traditions to Europe from the West in the 9th century, and two hundred years later we have the story of Saint Nicholas reaching Europe from the East.

The two stories seem to have merged into one in Holland, where Sinter Klaas rode through the villages on December 6th, dressed in a Bishop's gown and riding an eight-legged horse - which is what the Viking god Odin rode.

And now, the dark side of the story, which lives in one variation today. With Sinter Klaas rode an elf named Black Peter, who instead of giving gifts whipped the bad children of the houses they visited. And in the late 1600s, the Dutch brought that legend to their American settlements in the New York area. Black Peter disappeared from the story once it was resettled in America, too scary for kids. Of Black Peter, our Christmas legend retains only helper elves. Santa now does the "knowing whether you've been naughty or nice" part, too.

The Dutch also gave us the tradition of giving gifts at Christmas, albeit small food gifts for children. From them also we get the part about Sinter Klaas' living at the North Pole and using reindeer instead of horses.

The first printed story on Sinter Klaas in America was printed in 1773; his name was anglicized to Saint A. Claus.

In 1822, a scholar and organist named Clement Clarke Moore wrote the poem "An Account of a Visit from Saint Nicholas." Moore called his poem "nothing more
than a trifle," but it is the one thing he is remembered for today: You may know his poem better as "The Night Before Christmas."

And at that point, most of the American Christmas story's ingredients were in place.

At the same time, in Europe, the story was evolving again. Now Christkindlein, or the Christ child, who passed out gifts to children with the help of Pelaznickel - also an elf, but one with St. Nicholas' attributes, had replaced St. Nicholas.

In time, the stories again would merge into one, but two more things happened first. In 1863, the famous American illustrator, Thomas Nast, drew the first modern Santa Claus for Harper's Magazine. And almost immediately, Santa was drafted into our first known use of psychological warfare. It's true. Abraham Lincoln had Nast draw Santa Claus in a Union Army camp. That photo was copied and distributed throughout the South, to demoralize the Confederate Army. No word on whether it worked. But, we do know the war went on.

Santa was put to work again just after the Civil War. Northern merchants, needing to improve their sales in the dead of winter, merged all of the stories together and created the modern Christmas holiday. They blended the gift giving and Sinter Klaas of the Dutch with the German Christkindlein, the Turkish St. Nicholas, the French Pére Noel and the Viking Jultid. All of them had magically morphed into the image Nast had drawn: A distinctively dressed, kindly, jovial, cuddly, downright nice old bearded guy with a big lap - basically the one we now see in smart stores everywhere, guarded by elves, at the head of a line of acquisitive kids.

Well, the next thing we knew, by 1870, Christmas giving had become so popular that, from that year on, America's best retail month of the year has been December.

The last little piece of the story pranced into place when Rudolph, our little red-nosed reindeer, made the scene in 1939. Robert L. May, a 34-year-old copywriter for the Montgomery Ward chain, created Rudolph's story as a Christmas promotion.

May based his book, Rudolph the Red-Nosed Reindeer, on the story of the Ugly Duckling. And at first May called him Rollo, then Reginald, before he settled on Rudolph. But name aside, Montgomery Ward executives had a problem with Rudolph's red nose; 1939 wasn't that long after the end of Prohibition, and red noses were associated with hardcore alcoholics. May had to take his boss to the Lincoln Zoo to sketch reindeers to prove that Rudolph's red nose wouldn't be associated with drunks.

The promotion went well, but the Rudolph phenomenon didn't really catch fire until May's brother-in-law, songwriter Johnny Marks, developed the lyrics and melody for a Rudolph song. Singing cowboy Gene Autry recorded Marks' musical version of "Rudolph the Red-Nosed Reindeer" in 1949; it sold two million copies that year, and went on to become one of the best-selling songs of all time (second only to "White Christmas"). Have you ever met a kid who didn't know the words?

And that, my festive friends, is the story of the evolution of Christmas in America. Once outlawed here, Christmas has absorbed the festivals of many cultures. And we Americans have added our own little twists to make it the special time of year it is today - at least, for every good little girl and boy.

52. Aaron Burr-After the Smoke Cleared

Last week I told you the story of Alexander Hamilton, culminating with his death while dueling our then vice president, Aaron Burr. The surprising thing about that is the fact that Hamilton entered the field, pointed his gun toward the sky and discharged it. Burr then carefully aimed and dispatched Hamilton.
But what happened to Burr after that duel? Most history books simply consign the vice president to oblivion.

As it turns out, we've removed Burr from our history books for a good reason: What he did next would create a national scandal, yet the court case he was involved in led to a presidential decision that other presidents have hidden behind ever since.

First, a bit about Burr, a remarkable man who squandered everything. Son of the Reverend Aaron Burr, co-founder of Princeton University, then known as the College of New Jersey, orphaned at 3, Burr entered Princeton at only 13 years of age. He was graduated with honors at 16 and fought in the Revolution, only to have to end his military career due to illness, an illness that took three years to recover from. Burr studied law and became one of the two most successful attorneys in New York - the other being Alexander Hamilton.

Burr became Attorney General of New York, two years later a U.S. Senator and then Thomas Jefferson's vice president.
An unbelievable life of non-stop successes, one after another.
Then Burr shot Hamilton in that duel, and the public was outraged. Most people considered Burr a murderer, and Jefferson dumped him.

So, what's a guy to do? He could have gone back to his New York City law practice, which had made him wealthy. But Aaron Burr decided he wanted to become an Emperor, just like Napoleon. Now, that just wasn't going to happen here in the States. So Burr decided he'd raise an army and go conquer a large territory out west from the Spanish and install himself as Emperor for life.

This was a dicey time in history to try pulling this idea off. America had just purchased the Louisiana Territory, but Spain still held large areas of Mexico and our southwest. And the Spanish were also vying to control parts of the lower Mississippi, a conflict that almost brought on war between Spain and us.
Burr approached England about backing his plan for a new nation. After all, the British hated Spain and France and weren't too keen on their former Colonies. But cooler and smarter heads prevailed in London, and the Crown turned Burr down.

Burr then went to General James Wilkinson, an old friend in New Orleans who was responsible for our military presence in that area. Now, Wilkinson was the perfect choice for his job; he was already playing on both sides in Louisiana. Not only was he an active commanding officer, Wilkinson was also taking money from the Spanish to leave their armies of occupation alone.

Wilkinson agreed to help Burr. Burr bought a large riverboat and started sailing down to New Orleans while picking up a group of fighting men along the way. Got some out-of-work soldiers and some frontiers-men and, during a short stay in Ohio, picked up a great deal of money for this new venture from Harmon Blennerhassett, a wealthy Irishman. His son-in-law contributed to the venture also. Enough money came in that Burr managed to buy, get this, one million acres of land in which to start his new nation.

But schemes of launching new nations in America were contrary to Washington's vision at the time. After all, the feds also wanted to claim rights to all land on this continent. And Burr's asking potential inves-tors on his trip down the Mississippi brought his scheme to everyone's attention.

His friend General Wilkinson then realized that if Jefferson found out he'd joined Burr's camp, Wilkinson might be tried for treason. So he informed the president of Burr's intentions to seize a large section of the southwest to start a new nation.

Jefferson ordered Burr arrested on charges of treason and had him imprisoned. Burr made bail and then jumped. He was recaptured just outside of Natchez, Mississippi.

Now this was serious stuff, a real problem for the development of this country. We just couldn't have our ex-vice presidents trying to start new nations, especially if those nations might be in the way of this country's further expansion.

Jefferson considered only one man capable of presiding over Aaron Burr's trial for treason: Chief Justice John Marshall.

It should have been an open and shut case. There was just one little problem: Marshall didn't like Jefferson or his political beliefs and wasn't about to improve Jefferson's standing by convicting Burr of treason. Jefferson was a Democratic Republican who strongly believed in States' Rights; Marshall was a Federalist who believed in a strong central government.

So, Chief Justice Marshall called on Thomas Jefferson to come into his court and define the charges against Burr. Furious, Jefferson refused the court's summons, citing presidential rights. That's right, the trial of Aaron Burr for treason is the first case of a sitting president refusing a subpoena to testify in court. This is the case subsequently used by all presidents who have refused to testify while in office - used in Iran Contra, and many other cases over the years. (It also seems to be the basis for Dick Cheney's refusal to turn over documents to Congress.) Marshall paid Jefferson back: He freed Aaron Burr. Not guilty of treason.

But Burr, who had once been wealthy, was now broke; and his once sterling reputation was ruined. Burr left for Europe and lived there for the next six years, trying to get some country to back him once again to form a new country in North America.

He finally came home under a false name, Adolphus Arnot. That fooled no one; eventually, he went back to just being Aaron Burr, and started a new law practice in New York. While he wasn't anywhere near as successful as he had been the first time, practicing law allowed him to make a decent living.

Today, no one knows much about Burr, other than that he dueled with Hamilton. No one knows that he tried to raise cash and an army to seize a large chunk of the Southwest so he could be the area's Emperor for life. Certainly, no one knows that he was arrested for treason - and that his trial is the one where presidents started claiming immunity from a court's demands on them.

This is important stuff, so why isn't it covered in our history books? Simple: Who wants to know that some of our earliest heroes and politicians were really snakes at heart? Maybe if we had a little more realistic vision of those involved in this country's beginnings, we could cut the current crop some slack. Instead of thinking this nation is constantly going downhill.

By the way, no other vice president tried to start his own empire here - only arrogant Aaron Burr.

53. Revolution

If you had to visualize one American image from the Revolutionary War, what would it be? Maybe General George Washington and his 9,000 ragged and half-starved troops, freezing during the winter of 1777 at Valley Forge?

That image is certainly one taught to most of us in school, as an object lesson in how much our forefathers suffered to create this country. However, I always wondered why the British troops, all 20,000 of them, camped in warm quarters in Philadelphia 18 miles away, well fed and armed, never attacked Washington's troops during that winter bivouac. After all, they had already beaten Washington's men, which is why they were at Valley Forge to begin with; and an attack then and there pretty much would have ended our Revolution on the spot.

As it happens, the reason is that the British didn't want to. That's right: The British knew Washington was there, knew his men were frozen and starving and didn't have much in the way of munitions - and still they didn't attack, even when it would have meant an end to the war.

We owe it all to a man who should be our favorite British Commander, General Sir William Howe. You see, Howe actually sympathized with our complaints. He also believed, as many in the British military did, that cracking down on the Colonists during our little insurrection was a huge mistake. Therefore, he never really prosecuted the war as he should have.

Then again, the party circuit was keeping him far too entertained and ... diverted ... to bother himself with the dreariness, pain and suffering of war.

Sir William Howe was related to King George; his mother had been one of George the First's many illegitimate children, which obviously hadn't kept him from rising through the ranks. However, he was also a member of the Whig political party, and that group was opposed to the King's treatment of His subjects in America.

Nevertheless, when George ordered Howe to take command of the British troops in America and put down the rebellion, Howe at first refused. It's a good thing that he later changed his mind, because had someone like Clinton or Cornwallis been assigned to end the war first, they might well have been able to do so.

Still, in spite of being honored by the King's trust in him, William Howe didn't do much to win. A battle here, a battle there, never taking advantage of his forces' superiority. During the winter of Valley Forge, in fact, Howe, his officers and troops were kept busy in Philadelphia, the honored guests at a splendid succession of balls, routs, card parties, masquerades and every other kind of festivity then fashionable in England. His kind hosts, Philadelphia's wealthy, were mostly Loyalists upset that all those nasty New England patriots were causing this much dissension. They would have counted entertaining someone related to Royalty a social coup.

Another nice thing about Sir William Howe was that he was such a fun-loving fellow. In America and England, he was known as a man who loved "his glass, his lass and his game of cards" - the original "make love, not war" kind of guy. Political cartoons regularly appeared in the British press, always depicting the General as indulging in all his favorite vices while disorder reigned unchecked all around him.

Of course, fun followed the General wherever he went, be it New York, Boston, or some other town. His social calendar occupied his mind far more than the problems of war. Maybe one of the reasons he was so opposed to the King's punitive treatment of his subjects in this country was that the General was so enamored with our women.

His wife having remained in England, Howe found time to keep a full-time mistress here. She was a beautiful and well-endowed blonde, was Marcy Loring - better known as Mrs. Joshua Loring. The two met while General Howe was attending a party in Boston, purportedly in the interests of saving the Loyalists from the Sons of Liberty.

Now, those days were not all that far removed from the Puritans' strict times. Wouldn't you think that Mr. Joshua Loring might have had a least a small problem with his wife's becoming the mistress of the British general who was supposed to be putting down this uprising?

I would. As it turns out, however, Joshua Loring had become a major in the British Army. He didn't care to tarnish his military career by complaining about his commanding officer, especially over something as silly as constantly borrowing his wife. In return for his being such a good sport about it, General Howe appointed Joshua Loring to the position of Commissioner of Prisons. Loring promptly proceeded to take full advantage of that job, selling the rations intended for American POWs and pocketing the money himself.
You didn't know our Revolutionary War had been quite this juicy, did you?

Soon enough, gossip started spreading about the General and his mistress, and a scandalous little ditty began to circulate:

Sir William, he, snug as a flea
Lay all this time a snoring
Nor dreamed of harm, as he stayed warm
In bed with Mrs. Loring.

It didn't take long for that popular little song to make it back to the ears of King George, who was tired

of dumping a fortune into ending the Revolution and seeing precious few results for his money. Additionally, his enemies in France and Spain were displaying an interest in getting in on the action. So, in May of 1778, the King summoned his military commander back to England and replaced him with General Clinton.

But no one gets out of America without a farewell party, and all of Howe's officers were sorry to see the old man go. His leadership had given them social events, good food and warm quarters - all in all, a far better life than marching, bivouacking in uncomfortable places and actually fighting a war on forage and rationed food.

So they threw him one last monster of a party, which they called the Michianza. Howe's last Philadelphia party even had a theme, the Arabian Nights - and the town's single women were invited to attend it dressed as harem girls. I kid you not. Most of the single women encountered problems with their fathers, Loyalists or not, and were unable to attend dressed like belly dancers. But their outfits came ingeniously close to the real thing. That party lasted all day and into the night; and tears were shed when it ended, as no one wanted the General to leave. But leave he did.

In his three years of war, General Sir William Howe had accomplished little besides ensuring that everyone under his command had a good time. And it was that three years of Howe's virtual inaction that allowed us to gather strength and to finally end our Revolution as the victors.

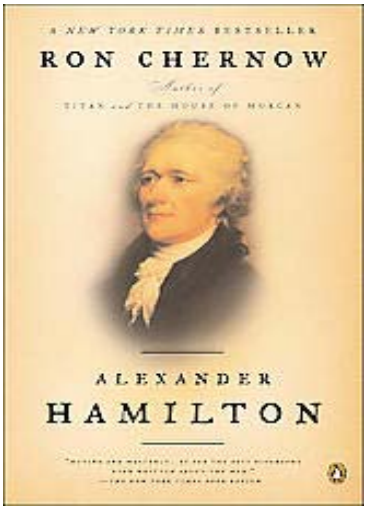
Marcy Loring and her husband Joshua stayed on in Boston; he was listed as a merchant on the wharfs in the city directory for 1800. Sir William Howe, back home in England, asked for a commission to clear his name of the charges of incompetence leveled against him. The commission worked on it for a year and disbanded without conclusion; Howe would later command British forces against the French.

Next time you hear the story of George Washington and his 9,000 ragged soldiers at Valley Forge, ask yourself why our textbooks never taught us the reason Washington's troops weren't attacked. Some of us would rather have known that it was because the British were having too good a time, looking at Colonial lasses in harem costumes, just 23 miles away in Philadelphia. It's certainly more true - and just as certainly less depressing - than thinking that all the suffering at Valley Forge was what somehow saved us.

54. What's the Big Deal Monica?

Her name was Rachel, and everyone who knew her in the days before the American Revolution called her a true red headed beauty. Married off at 16 years of age, she had a son, Peter.
But she didn't find married life to her taste. And so, soon thereafter, Rachel and her mother both deserted their husbands and took off for the West Indies. However, island life wasn't all it was cracked up to be, either, and Rachel soon returned to the States.

She was promptly arrested: The charge was whoring. That's right. A man could bring charges against his wife for sleeping around, and that's exactly what Rachel's husband did.
After spending some time in jail, Rachel again left town and moved in with James Hamilton. They had two children.



But there was still the previous marriage to deal with, for her real husband, furious about her living with another man, filed for divorce. Pointing out that she had had two illegitimate children by Mr. Hamilton, again he charged her with - and I quote - "giving herself to whoring with everyone." Rachel was divorced and convicted of adultery. Her sentence? She was forbidden by the court ever to marry again, which meant that her two sons by Hamilton would forever be considered illegitimate.

One of those illegitimate sons would one day be one of the men who framed our Constitution. He would also write the Federalist Papers and become our first Secretary of the Treasury: He was Alexander Hamilton.

Rachel and her common-law husband and the boys moved back to the island of Nevis.

Like his mother, Hamilton had a tough row to hoe. His beloved mother Rachel died of a fever when he was only 11 years old; his father, James Hamilton, had run off years earlier. From that day on, Alexander Hamilton had to provide for himself. He did it with the job he had found two years earlier, clerking for an import-export company. There, he apparently developed his writing skills; they would serve him well later in life, but at the time his writing brought him to the attention of a Presbyterian minister. Perceiving that the boy was quite clever, the minister managed to secure funds to send him back to the mainland, so that he could attend King's College in New York.

Like most teenage boys at the time, Hamilton quickly embraced the idea of the upcoming Revolution; he joined the army in 1775.

It was in the Battle of Princeton that Hamilton first distinguished himself and came to the attention of George Washington, who in turn made him his personal secretary for the next four years. But, here's the reason why: Hamilton had grown up on Nevis; therefore, he was fluent in both English and French. Washington needed an interpreter for the French soldiers fighting beside him, so Hamilton got the job. It should be noted that Washington was always impressed with Hamilton, although he certainly overlooked most of his faults.

Those faults? First, Hamilton made Bill Clinton look like a choirboy when it came to the ladies. He had red hair like his mother's and was quite attractive; women threw themselves at his feet.

Still, he wanted to be politically connected, so he married Elizabeth Schuyler in 1780. Her father, General Philip Schuyler, was wealthy, Dutch and a power in New York politics.

Rumor had it that Hamilton was fooling around with Elizabeth's sister, Angelica. Even her family questioned whether or not the two were having an affair. In spite of rumor, General Schuyler had his new son-in-law appointed to the Continental Congress. At the same time Hamilton studied law; he was admitted to the New York bar and opened an office at 57 Wall Street. But Hamilton wanted to be more than just an attorney; he also wanted to be a banker. That required money. So Hamilton hatched a plan.

At the time New York's citizens were being poisoned by their drinking water: Human wastes were seeping into the aquifer under the city, from which its drinking water was drawn. Money, and a lot of it, was raised to pipe clean water into the city from the lakes north of New York. Hamilton managed to get put in charge of that project. Then, apparently feeling that the city needed a strong bank more than the citizens needed to live, Hamilton diverted those funds to his own use in order to found the Bank of New York — still in existence today. It caused a scandal in his time, but it blew over.

Then Hamilton used his considerable writing skills to help frame our Constitution and George Washington came calling again, this time to make Hamilton his Secretary of the Treasury.

His political enemies spread the story that Hamilton was buying up Veteran's Certificates, IOUs to those who served in the Revolution promising to pay our military for fighting once our treasury had sufficient money. It was reported that Hamilton had been buying those certificates up at pennies on the dollar in order to reap the windfall once the government could pay the IOUs. Hamilton's defense was sheer genius: He said that his accuser was nothing more than a jealous husband who had found out that Hamilton was having an affair with his wife. That started the tongues wagging: Admitting an affair to get out of other, more serious charges. Was his political career over? Hardly. Thomas Jefferson wanted him impeached. John Adams gave it as his opinion that Hamilton was illegitimate - therefore, what else could proper society expect? In Adams' words, "Hamilton's ambition comes from a superabundance of secretions that he cannot find whores enough to draw off."

General David Cobb was more perceptive. His words ring true to this day: "Hamilton is fallen for the present, but if he fornicates with every female in the cities of New York and Philadelphia, he will rise again, for purity of character, after a period of political existence is not necessary for public patronage."

Then came the duel with Aaron Burr, who had run against Jefferson for president. That presidential race was closer than the Bush -Gore contest: Tied in the Electoral College, it went to the House of Representatives; after 36 roll calls the vote was still tied, when in walks Alexander Hamilton, who manages to get one vote more for Jefferson. A single vote in the House gave him the Presidency.

Burr became Vice President; at the time, that was how we consoled the loser. Burr was furious, but he had another plan. He wanted to walk the vice presidency for the governorship of New York — a more powerful position. Again, Hamilton made his case to the public and Burr realized he wouldn't get that position. In making certain Burr didn't get elected, Hamilton made certain slurs on Burr's character. Burr demanded that he either retract them publicly or prove them. Hamilton refused to do either.

Time to duel. Something Hamilton didn't believe in, as his son had been killed in a duel just three years earlier.

It gets stranger. If you recall, Jefferson had called for Hamilton's impeachment over his admission of having affairs with married women, but then Hamilton had helped him become President. By the same token, Hamilton and Burr had once been friends, often working cases together when they'd both practiced law in New York. Additionally, Burr was still Vice President of the United States.

So, when the two men took the field with their weapons, maybe Hamilton was counting on their old friendship, for he deloped. Simply pointing his gun straight up in the air, he discharged it, showing Burr that he respected him enough to not do him harm.

Burr, on the other hand, took careful aim and killed the then unarmed Hamilton.

Alexander Hamilton helped create America with his work on the Constitution, and more importantly with his work as secretary of the Treasury. America was bankrupt after the Revolution; Hamilton put our new country on firm financial ground.

But he also stole money meant for a public water works for New York so he could own a bank. He had many affairs that he openly admitted to. And he had more political enemies than he had friends.

In hindsight, I'm not sure I would have pointed my gun straight up in the air and discharged it harmlessly. Like his affairs, it wasn't the smartest or most prudent thing to do.

55. Action Jackson

He's the president that most don't know anything about, other than his nickname, Old Hickory. Of course, I'm referring to Andrew Jackson, seventh president of the United States and one of the great hotheads of American history.

First, let me read to you from his official biography, from the White House website. "Born March 15, 1767, in Waxhaw, South Carolina, fiercely jealous of his honor, he engaged in brawls and, in a duel, killed a man who cast an unjustified slur on his wife Rachael.

That's the problem with having the White House write biographies: they always show our presidents in the best light. However, to this day no one knows whether Jackson was born in North Carolina or South Carolina, so that certainty in his bio is inaccurate. And he didn't kill a man over an unjustified slur on his wife Rachael, either, but kill a man he did.

It happened in 1806, when a very well established Tennessee attorney, Charles Dickinson, managed to get himself crossways with Jackson. It wasn't over a woman, it was over horse racing debts, and the end result was that Dickinson called Jackson a poltroon and a coward.

Jackson demanded satisfaction in the form of a duel. Dickinson accepted and the two met in Logan County, Kentucky, and faced each other at 24 feet.

Now Charles Dickinson was not only an able attorney, he was also a crack shot. Joking with friends on the way to Kentucky, he shot a string in two from 24 feet, and then left the two pieces with the innkeeper - to show to Jackson and his party, who were behind them.

Knowing his opponent's skill, Jackson realized that he was handicapped. So his friends suggested that he let Dickinson shoot first; if Jackson survived, he would have time to make an accurate shot in return.

Well, the two men got to the dueling area and faced each other at 24 feet. And the moment the sign was given, Charles Dickinson raised his pistol and fired, hitting Jackson squarely in the chest.

But Jackson didn't fall. He stood there with his hand on his chest covering the wound, clenched his teeth said nothing. Dickinson did; wide-eyed that Jackson was still standing, he cried out, "My God, have I missed him?"

Dickinson was ordered back to his spot. Unarmed, he knew what was coming next, and certainly Jackson carefully raised and aimed his pistol, then pulled the trigger - and nothing happened. On the second pull the pistol fired, and Charles Dickinson bled to death from his wound.

Of course, there would be more problems with Jackson and others. Seven years later, when one of his junior officers, William Carroll, was about to duel one Jesse Benton, Carroll asked Jackson to be his second. And at first, Jackson said he was too old for that nonsense, but later he acquiesced.

Benton, unlike Dickinson, didn't really care for the idea of dying that day; so, when the handkerchief dropped he squatted and swung himself around quickly to get off his shot. Benton was shot - in his backside - but the real wound came from Jackson; he verbally thrashed the kid publicly for the way he'd behaved, squatting instead of standing up like a man and getting gunned down.

Turns out that Jesse Benton's brother, Thomas, was an aide to General Jackson. Off in Washington at the time of that duel, he came home to Tennessee to the news that Jackson had dishonored his brother's name. Well, he started trashing Jackson's name in public. Of course, Jackson wanted satisfaction; he challenged Thomas Benton to a duel, but Benton wanted none of it.

Then one day, when both Benton brothers were staying in Nashville at a local inn, General Jackson and a few friends noticed them as they made their way to the local post office. On the way back they crossed paths again, and his time Jackson pulled out his bullwhip and roared at Benton, "Now, you damned rascal, I am going to punish you. Defend yourself!" Benton went for his gun, Jackson went for his, and the next thing they knew, brother Jesse pulled a gun and shot Jackson in his shoulder. Jackson shot at Thomas and missed; but Jackson's nephew, Stockley Hays, was there that day. He pulled out his sword cane and tried to run Jesse Benton through, but his blade broke on a button; so he jumped on Jesse and was stabbing him in the arm with a little knife he carried before the crowd pulled everyone apart.

The doctors wanted to amputate Jackson's arm, it was that badly damaged, but he insisted it remain. Of course, this is just the kind of trouble that Andrew Jackson would get into over horse racing debts, or denouncing how someone fought a duel. But it was when his wife Rachael's honor was involved that Jackson went nuts.

Jackson had fallen in love with Rachael Robards somewhere around 1791. She was a pipe-smoking frontier woman of hardy stock - and, coincidentally, married to Lewis Robards. But the marriage wasn't a happy one; so Rachael decided to start over again in the Spanish Territory of Florida. Andrew Jackson, saying he was just protecting her on a dangerous journey, tagged along.

In time Rachael divorced Lewis Robards and married Jackson, but it appears that the divorce wasn't legal. This made her a bigamist, and that is sometimes a problem when your husband decides he wants to be in politics.

Just to prove that this year's campaigning isn't any dirtier than that in years gone by, in 1803 Andrew Jackson was a sitting judge on the Tennessee Supreme Court when he got into a fight with Governor Nolichucky Jack. That's right, the same Jack Sevier who took Tennessee, then called the Republic of Franklin, out of North Carolina and almost went to war over the whole deal.

Nolichucky Jack, in crossing swords with Jackson outside of the Knoxville courtroom, cried, "I know of no great services you have rendered to the country, except taking a trip to Florida with another man's wife." That pretty well did it. Jackson screamed back, "Did you mention her sacred name?"

Both men pulled their pistols. Both shot; both missed, and again the crowd pulled the two apart. Well, Jackson wanted a formal duel over this one, but governor Nolichucky Jack resisted the call. So Jackson took out an ad in the Tennessee Gazette which read, "I, Andrew Jackson, do pronounce, publish and declare to the world that his Excellency John Sevier is a base coward and a poltroon. He will basely insult, but has not the courage to repair."

Just in case you've forgotten the plot, this is between the Governor of Tennessee and a Supreme Court Justice. And don't you know, it's a duel.

The two men met on the field of honor, but before they ever got to their positions started calling each other names. Then Jackson ran at the governor with a big stick in his hand, so the governor pulled out his sword, which spooked his horse, which started running. So Jackson took advantage of that by trying to shoot the governor in the back; but Sevier's son drew a pistol on Jackson, so Jackson's second drew a gun on Sevier's kid - and the next thing you know, no one was shot that day. No one. They were all so embarrassed at this free-for-all, hardly in the Southern tradition of a duel to obtain satisfaction, that they kind of all quietly went their own ways.

Jackson still carried the bullets in his body from earlier duels. His wife Rachael was never accepted in proper society; maybe it was the rumor that she was married to two men, and maybe it was just her pipe.

Thomas Benton and Jackson served together in the U.S. Senate and actually became allies, never bringing up their near-fatal brawl of a few years earlier.

Then Andrew Jackson, the man who fought anyone who even lightly insulted him, the hero of the Battle of New Orleans, became our seventh president in 1829.

One of the first orders of business he dealt with was the Indian Removal Act of 1830, which he signed into law. It led to the infamous Trail of Tears, moving most of the tribes of the southeast into what we now know as Oklahoma. But here's what you didn't know: The Cherokee Nation of Georgia sued to invalidate that law, and took it all the way to the Supreme Court in 1832 - and won their case. That meant Congress had no right to remove them from their property, but Andrew Jackson ignored the Supreme Court's ruling. Saying, "John Marshall has made his decision, now let him enforce it," Jackson continued with his Indian removal program.

Then he took on the National Bank, the 1800s version of the Federal Reserve, saying it had too much control over Congress and was unconstitutional. Jackson defunded that bank, which led to his censure by the Senate in 1834.

Ironically, the man who pulled guns out for any insult, the man who ignored the Supreme Court, and the man who tried to ruin our national currency, is today remembered as another great president and is honored on our $20 bill.

Just a reminder as the election nears: No matter who you plan to vote for, either one is better than Old Hickory, Andrew Jackson.

56. The Real Appeasers

For the last fifty years, whenever a situation comes up that might lead to war, it inevitably leads to a national debate on the wisdom of the potential action. Certain elements always trot out that old historical adage, about being an appeaser. Which in turn brings up the memory of British Prime Minister Neville Chamberlain, stepping off the plane on October 1, 1938, after having negotiated with Hitler over parts of Czechoslovakia and proclaiming, "This means peace in our time." How wrong he was, and the Second World War was proof of that.

Of course, there is one important point that is always forgotten; the Second World War was coming, no matter what anyone did or negotiated. It was just a question of the start date.

However, while certain factions today love to label anyone who questions the validity of any war as an appeaser, most people don't understand how and why Britain came to the decision not to challenge Hitler at that point in time. Nor was it just Chamberlain's decision to negotiate with Hitler; the French had also made the same decision.

But there were many factors; the most important was the viewpoint of what was known as the Cliveden Set in England, an informal group of elites that carried far more sway in the matter than most have recognized. At the heart of the Cliveden Set were Lord and Lady Astor. Among its members were powerful politicians, writers, journalists, bankers and aristocrats; and according to Claud Cockburn, who wrote for the British periodical The Week, they were decidedly pro-Nazi.

Now, Nancy Astor's brother-in-law was John Jacob Astor, owner of the London Times, so the public heard their views. King Edward VIII was also an informal member of the group.

Additionally, Nancy Astor was nobody's fool. She had been England's first female member of Parliament and was one of the country's greatest anti-Semites. Once in a 1938 Foreign Affairs Committee meeting, she took on conservative MP Alan Graham by saying, "Only a Jew like you would dare to be rude to me." She also believed that the media, controlled by Jews and Communists, were leading the nation to war.

Which brings up the second point of why the Cliveden Set were against the war. The fact is, they were rabidly anti-Communist. They believed that Hitler's rearming of Germany would be Europe's best protection against those Godless Communists coming out of Russia. Which is the real story that no one knows: Both Germany and France knew Germany was rearming, but didn't care. Germans were Anglos like they were; Russians weren't.

And that brings up the strangest part of this yet, for not only was this the time of the Great Depression, but it was a time when the study of eugenics was in full swing. That is the concept of breeding our way to a better race of people. It was big in America and big in Europe; after all, the only thing Hitler was proposing was creating a Master Race, but the Cliveden Set believed that was OK, better to breed out your lower class. And Russians were certainly a lower class of the human species.

Two other factors came into play. One: The Cliveden Set believed that the Treaty of Versailles was unbelievably unfair to Germany for losing the First World War, and that the anger it had produced in German citizens was the real underpinning of their current problems. The agreement to allow Hitler to take back the Sudetenland from the Czechs made sense; after all, the majority of citizens there were Germans, and it was their way to a slow dismantling of the Versailles Treaty.

The final kicker is that they wholeheartedly supported the Nazis' view that government should only be concerned with the issues of business leaders and not the workforce. So what if you go totalitarian to get the commoners in line, that was just fine with them. They didn't care much for democracy, either; it didn't fit into their vision of eugenics, which said that only the elite should have power anyhow.

Makes you wonder how Charles Lindbergh cast the deciding vote in all of this, doesn't it?

As you might know, Lindbergh had left America after the kidnapping and murder of his son, settling in England and working with Alexis Carrel, who was, yes, working on eugenics, or his version of the master race. Lindbergh had a dark side, in that he had little use for human compassion. He was also an anti-Semite who believed that democracy was foolish, as it gave too many truly stupid people the right to have their voices heard. In the three years he spent in England, he would develop that same contempt for their system of government and the British people.

But, during his stay, Lindbergh was asked to come to Germany and give his opinion of the new Luftwaffe. In a nutshell, Lindberg was blown away by what the Germans had accomplished in so little time, and he also believed that the Luftwaffe already had in its possession 10,000 modern aircraft. He returned to England and spread the alarm.

Lindbergh was wrong; Germany had only 3,300 modern planes, but that didn't matter. For you see, both British and French intelligence had come to the same conclusion, 10,000 German planes - but no politician believed those numbers. Once Lindbergh said the same thing, suddenly everyone believed it.

Lindbergh also agreed that Nazism was a strong form of government and would win any war anyhow, but that was OK too. After all, Germans were Anglos, knew how to deal with the commoners in their society and were ruled by the elites, just like eugenics preached; therefore, America in time could easily do business with this new regime. Of course, he also ignored many of the horrible stories already circulating about their treatment of German Jews.

Lindbergh was immediately asked to join the Cliveden Set. He and his wife Anne became regular members, as did Ambassador Joseph Kennedy.

So, here's what you have: a large group of elitists who actually weren't pro-Nazi - they were rabid anti-Communists, and Hitler's Germany was the perfect buffer between Russia and Europe. Better he be rearmed. They detested democracy as practiced, believing that the world would be a better place if run by the elite. They hated unions and loved Hitler's idea of dealing only with the needs of business, to the exclusion of the average person. As for eugenics, well, they were titled British, believing they should never marry anyone from the common class.

As for the German Jewish issue, Lady Nancy Astor wrote to Joe Kennedy, "Hitler would have to do more than just give a rough time to the killers of Christ," before she'd be in favor of "launching Armageddon to save them." Nice touch, lady.

So, Chamberlain went to Munich and signed that agreement, and five months later Hitler had broken all of its provisions. And a year later the world was at war.

Today, anyone who questions war is labeled an appeaser, to tarnish them as somehow liberal or weak for even suggesting that war isn't inevitable.

Here's the rub: The Cliveden Set, Lady Nancy Astor, the London Times? All conservative. That's right, Lady Astor was a right-wing conservative in Parliament. The Times to this day is conservative in nature. The people who determined England's future were racists (based on their love of eugenics) and anti-union, and they believed that Hitler would take care of Russia and rejoin the Anglo race, if they could just dismantle the Treaty of Versailles.

When the war started, Lindbergh beat it back to America and publicly fronted the America First party to keep us out of the war. He did serve with distinction in the Pacific once the war started, and later in life rejected his racist views. Most don't know it, but it was Lindbergh that our government sent to Germany immediately after the war, to bring their rocket scientists to America to work on our missile programs.

Now the real question: Was appeasement wrong? Maybe not; here's why.

There are two opinions on what might have happened if the war had broken out in late 1938. William Shirer, who wrote The Rise and Fall of the Third Reich, believed Hitler would have been defeated immediately. But putting the war off for a year gave Britain and France 12 months to develop a stronger military and arms. Not that it did France much good.

More important, some 80% of Americans in 1938 wanted nothing to do with the war. Same in 1939, same after the war started. But that extra time gave Roosevelt some breathing room to start the Lend Lease Act, start to modernize our military and slowly get the public behind his actions. America was, more than likely, the pivotal partner in winning the war. Had the World War broken out in 1938, by not appeasing Hitler, we would have been way late to the game, maybe too late to stop Europe from falling.

The next time you hear someone accuse someone else of being an appeaser, painting them as weak or liberal, remember, the appeasers in England were members of the conservative party. The liberals there and in America wanted to get rid of Hitler and his totalitarian ideas.

57. Our Socialist Inspired Pledge

Back in 2003 the Ninth Circuit Court of Appeals ruled that the Pledge of Allegiance was unconstitutional. Not the majority of the words recited by our school-aged children, or by most of us from time to time, just the two words, "under God," inserted into the Pledge by Congress in 1954.

I hadn't heard that much outrage on TV and radio in years. What I couldn't understand is why I didn't really have any opinion at all. If the words "under God" stay in on appeal, fine by me; if the Pledge gets rewritten, it neither shakes my love of this country nor rattles any of my religious beliefs.

Then, the story silently faded away, only to return with a vengence this week as yet another Federal Judge declared the Pledge unconstitutional.

Keep in mind that my father was a 32-year career Air Force officer. Obviously, I grew up in a family where you learned to show respect for what this country stood for. My grandmother, Elsa Laird, taught 1st grade at the American Lutheran Church School, on Hollywood Way in Burbank, California, for 30 years. I attended 3rd grade there in the early sixties.

My first reaction, then, was to wonder how Elsa would have felt about this court ruling. For two decades, her kids had said the pledge without "under God," and for the last decade of her life, that homage was recited every day. Knowing that Elsa was a German farm girl, originally from Reedsburg, Wisconsin, and knowing her abiding love of the Lutheran faith, I came to the conclusion that she wouldn't have liked the decision, but it wouldn't have shaken her all that much. You see, Elsa was deeply religious, but she wasn't pious.

And, truthfully, Elsa didn't care whether other people were Catholic, Baptist or Buddhist; she cared only whether their children were disciplined, educated and well mannered, for her world involving personal character, not ideology.

Back in 2003 I looked to see how our so-called liberal media would handle this situation. I watched NBC, CNN, ABC and CBS to see if any of these Limbaugh liberals backed the court's decision. Nope, not one of them did. I did hear many talk-show hosts blast the political makeup of the Ninth Circuit Court's Judges, blaming this decision - of course - on Democratic Presidential appointments. That was humorous.

Talk radio is great about taking on national issues without benefit of looking at all the pertinent facts. That's right: the Nineth Circuit Court has Judge Alfred T. Goodwin, 78, and one of the two judges who ruled against the Pledge as it's written. He was appointed by Richard Nixon in 1971.

What bothered me most about the debate is all the who called into shows and immediately began staunchly backing the Declaration of Independence, the Constitution and the Bill of Rights - and their personal religious beliefs. That's fine, but all those documents and doctrines are actually extremely liberal in nature. You know, peace, love, tolerance for others and so on. Many today also seem to forget that the so-called conservatives in the time of our Revolution were known as Tories and stood with the British Crown.

And I guess it also bothered me to find that apparently I was the only one who knew one little secret about the Pledge of Allegiance: Sixty years ago, just as World War Two was starting, the Pledge was all but struck down in its entirety by the Supreme Court. I didn't hear that come out of the lips of any commentator. Nor did anyone offer a full explanation of who lobbied for the additional words, "under God" - and why.

"I pledge allegiance to my flag and the Republic for which it stands, one nation indivisible, with liberty and justice for all."

That's the original Pledge, as written by Francis Bellamy. Published in Youth's Companion magazine in Boston in 1892, it was distributed nationally, just in time for the 400th anniversary of Columbus' discovery of America.

There are a few things you should know about the man who wrote the Pledge of Allegiance. First, Bellamy was a former Baptist Minister, born in Rome, New York; and he'd been thrown out of the church

before he wrote our Pledge of Allegiance. Why? Because he was a darn old Socialist. Spent too much pulpit time preaching radical ideas - equity, fairness for the average American worker. Stuff like that. And apparently, his last group of parishioners in Boston didn't want to hear such nonsense. Letting workers make enough money to live decent lives and ending child labor. Pure heresy.

However, it was also the Youth's Companion that in 1888 had started the movement of putting the American flag into schools. Prior to that time, schools didn't fly our flag. During that period of American history, however, our second great wave of immigrants arrived. This time they were Eastern and Southern European families; visibly different, they were immigrants for whom, frankly, the Anglo-Americans didn't care at all. Hungarians, Germans, Italians. So, the flag was put into schools to let their children know that they were now part of our system of government. And that's exactly why school districts started having the Pledge recited. On October 12th, 1892, to be exact, 12 million kids said a little loyalty oath, meant to ensure that the children of these recent and not necessarily trustworthy immigrants grew up to be good Americans. Nothing wrong with that; however, over the years there would be changes to the Pledge.

The first change to the Pledge came about because the Daughters of the American Revolution felt that saying, "I pledge allegiance to my flag" was confusing to little kids. Heck, they might be thinking that they were still pledging allegiance to the flag of the country that their parents had come from. So, at the First National Flag Conference on June 14th, 1923, the words were changed to "I pledge allegiance to the Flag of the United States of America." Yeah, that's the ticket.

However, problems were already forming. The year before, the Ku Klux Klan had taken control of the Oregon legislature, demanding that the Pledge be recited before all meetings - oh, and that all the Catholic Schools be closed, so that those children would have to attend public schools and get a proper indoctrination. The Supreme Court ruled against both those actions.

Other changes were made. At first, people saying the Pledge didn't put the right hand over their heart; no, one extended the right arm forward, exactly like a Nazi salute. That wasn't a problem for the first 50 years we repeated the Pledge, until the outbreak of World War Two. Then, of course, we saw that it looked revoltingly like the way those Germans hailed Hitler; so instead, across the nation, we started putting our hands over our hearts.

Again because of the war, Congress then involved itself with our Pledge. Up to that point, in spite of the fact that every day millions of school kids extended their arms and said the Pledge, it wasn't government policy that they do so. But, with the Second World War, Congress acted to make the Pledge -and the hand over the heart - official.

That act led to another change: The Supreme Court ruling in 1943, in the case of The West Virginia Board of Education vs. Barnette. The Barnettes, who were Jehovah's Witnesses, claimed that they could not be compelled to recite even an official Pledge; their religion forbade them to salute any symbol of a worldly government. In agreeing with the Barnette family, the Supreme Court wrote, "If there is any fixed star in our Constitutional constellation, it is that no official, high or petty, can prescribe what shall be orthodox in politics, nationalism, religion, or other matters of opinion or force citizens to confess by word or act therein."

Yes, just like in the story we brought you in this series some time ago about the military tribunals of World War Two, the Supreme Court struck down the Pledge as official government policy for enforcement. The court said, "The Pledge is optional." Period.

Of course, when you and I were growing up, did any of your teachers inform you of the Supreme

Court decision and explain your rights not to say the Pledge if you didn't want to? Mine didn't. But that's okay, too. I would have been one of those who would have said it anyway.

Then came the last change, in 1954, when the "under God" part was added. It was the Knights of Columbus who campaigned for this change; the Cold War was on, and they wanted us to differentiate our nation from that of those Godless Russians. They found a sympathetic ear in Michigan Representative Louis Rabaut.

By everything I can find on him, Rabaut was a devout, decent, hardworking man. Incidentally, Rabaut represented East Detroit - the Hammtramck area, which is where my grandmother and parochial schoolteacher, Elsa, met my grandfather. And I can't find one negative thing about Rabaut anywhere. He fought for civil rights and decent work conditions for the average man. He was a Democrat, but that's the only dirt I can find on him. Something that I think tells you a lot about the man is that Rabaut also proposed that our letters' postmarks be stamped "Pray for Peace." That part didn't make it; putting "under God" into the Pledge did. And now, in the Western states, that's been struck down for a second time.

Which takes us back to the author of the Pledge of Allegiance, Francis Bellamy. He'd been thrown out of the church for preaching fairness for all Americans, he writes the Pledge. And then what?
And then, for a time, he went into advertising as a copy editor, then semi-retired to Tampa, Florida. When he died there in 1931, in the days before Social Security, he was still working for the utility company at 76 years of age.

In 1954, after Congress passed the legislation adding the words "under God", his granddaughter was asked how she thought Francis Bellamy would have liked the insertion of the words "under God" into his Pledge. And she replied, "not at all."

You see, our Baptist minister, thrown out of the church for preaching equality for all in 1890, quit the church altogether in the late twenties in Florida. Why? Because he couldn't stand the racist, bigoted style of preaching in the Jim Crow days. The man who had written the words, "with liberty and justice for all," now felt that many religions were preaching more hate than tolerance. So, he walked away from organized religion, but not from God. Bellamy did more than write our Pledge, he lived it.

I still don't know why the two court's decision didn't really upset me one way or another. I just wish all the passion that I heard over this subject from incensed people could be channeled into improving education, rather than channeled into worrying about whether kids should say the Pledge as it is currently written.

Or maybe I'm more like my German Lutheran parochial school teacher grandmother than I thought; Elsa cared only that children be disciplined, educated and well mannered, be instilled with real personal character. That part seems to have escaped all scrutiny theses past two years.

58. Those Crazy Roosevelts

Even today the name Teddy Roosevelt inspires many Americans; some admire his ruggedness, some his environmental concerns. But mostly we revere him because we still consider him the personification of a President who believed in this country and opened the world to all of us.

Franklin Delano Roosevelt also is remembered today, not as fondly. Many think he did more harm to our economic society than he ever helped, while at the same time they demand that costly programs he put in place, such as Social Security, be maintained forever. But, if just one thing in American history had been changed, today we would be talking about the Teddy - not the Franklin - Roosevelt period in American politics.

Teddy's son Ted hated his distant cousin Franklin, and he fully planned one day to place himself in the White House and consign FDR to the dustbin of history.

There's little doubt that Franklin Delano Roosevelt grew up idolizing Teddy; in fact, FDR copied everything that Teddy Roosevelt had ever done. He went to Harvard, started his career in the New York legislature, became Assistant Secretary of the Navy in a time of war - whatever political map Teddy Roosevelt had laid out, FDR didn't vary from it one bit. He even ran for Vice President right after his stint as our Assistant Secretary of the Navy.

The one exception was in his affiliation: Teddy was a Republican, at least before he became a progressive, and FDR ran on the Democratic ticket with Ohio governor James Cox in 1920.

Now the other Roosevelts weren't unhappy with FDR's democratic notions of government; what seemed to have set them off was the fact that, when he went on a whistle-stop train tour of America during that campaign, most voters that appeared at his speeches believed that he was one of Teddy Roosevelt's sons. People would shout, "You're just like your old man," and "I voted for your father."

That infuriated Ted Roosevelt, who, by also joining the whistle-stop campaign tour, took to campaigning for Warren G. Harding. Ted had his train pull into stations that FDR's had just left and let the assembled public there know that he, not FDR, was Teddy Roosevelt's son. It got nasty, for Ted would say things such as "FDR does not have the breeding of our family." Ted also suggested that FDR was a coward because he hadn't gone to war like all four of Teddy's sons had.

It got so bad that James Cox had to take Ted on directly, saying, "It is a pitiful spectacle to see this son of a great sire shamelessly paraded before the public. Out of respect for the memory of his illustrious father, someone ought to take this juvenile spokesman aside and in primer fashion, make plain what really ought to be obvious."

None of Teddy's children shed a tear when Cox and FDR lost that election in a landslide. Privately gleeful when FDR contracted polio, Teddy's children figured that his political days were over, which would leave Ted the opening he needed for his ascendancy to the presidency.

Ted Roosevelt was also following his father's political map, accepting the same job that both his father and FDR had held, Assistant Secretary of the Navy in Harding's Administration, a gift for helping him achieve the presidency.

But FDR wasn't down and out because of his polio; he fought back, while Ted's career was nearly ruined. It came about because of the Teapot Dome Scandal during Harding's term in office, which concerned the illegal leasing of naval oil reserves to private interests. Now, to be fair, Ted Roosevelt had absolutely nothing to do with the fraud, but because he was Assistant Secretary of the Navy, the public convicted him as just as guilty as others in Harding's administration.

In 1924, after months of practice at home, FDR managed to walk to the podium at the Democratic National Convention, with the help of his son James, and nominate New York governor Al Smith for the presidency. Smith didn't win the nomination that time around, but the appearance proved that FDR was not going to throw away his career just because he was now an invalid. Smith decided to run for the governorship of New York one more time, only to find that Ted Roosevelt would run against him.

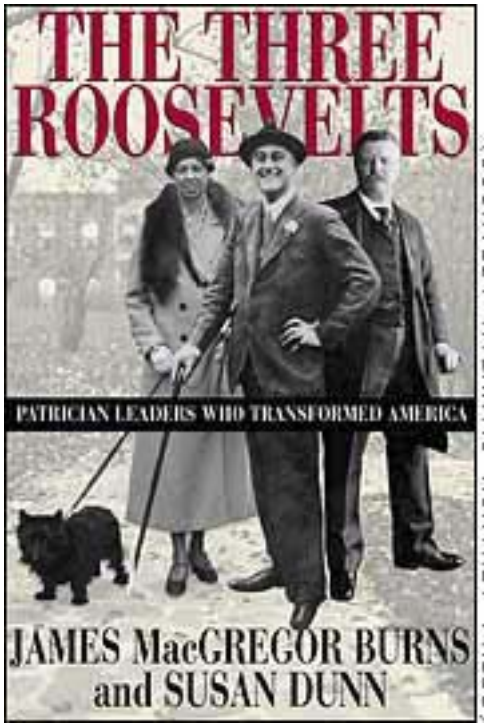
Now, in spite of the fact that there was no love lost between the two men, this time around FDR refused to say anything negative against Ted during the campaign. His wife Eleanor had a score to settle. You see, Eleanor's father Elliot was Teddy Roosevelt's younger brother; Teddy was her uncle. Yet, in spite of being closely related to the former president, she grew up shy, awkward, and not attractive, and she was always treated poorly by the Roosevelt kids at family get-togethers. Alice Roosevelt had been particularly cruel to Eleanor. But Eleanor also knew that if Ted Roosevelt became New York's governor, it would hurt her husband's ability to resurrect his political career; so the once painfully shy, gangly child took the gloves off and beat the crap out of Ted Roosevelt at campaign stops across New York.

Eleanor had another row to settle with Teddy's kids; when it was discovered that her husband Franklin had been having an affair with her social secretary, Lucy Mercer, it was Alice Roosevelt who was quoted as saying that Franklin deserved a good time - after all, he was married to Eleanor.

And that wasn't the worst part. Eleanor found out that it was Alice Roosevelt who had encouraged Franklin to have the relationship to begin with, although no one knows whether she did it just to punish Eleanor or planned the liaison to derail Franklin's political career once it was discovered.

Ted lost the election. Teddy's daughter Alice was furious. Now she would do nasty impersonations of Eleanor Roosevelt and her buck teeth, meanwhile writing to family and friends about Eleanor and her feminist buddies, whom Alice called female impersonators.

Four years later FDR became governor of New York. Ted Roosevelt had to accept the governorship of Puerto Rico, where once in his posting he wrote to his mother, "Franklin now, I suppose, will run for the



(COURTESY ATLANTIC MONTHLY PRESS)

Presidency, and I am beginning to think of nasty things to say about him."

Ted Roosevelt would later accept the governorship of the Philippines, but he knew his political star was in eclipse. Tainted by being associated with the Teapot Dome Scandal, he couldn't win the governorship of New York, a state where his father was still revered. Ted wrote again to his mother, "I do not feel now that I have anything to be ashamed of for having gone into public life," and intimated his time was over. When FDR became president, Ted Roosevelt left his posting in the Philippines.

But the Roosevelt sibling wars weren't over just yet. A brother of Ted and Alice, Kermit, defected to FDR's side, writing to the new president, "I can say with absolute truth that, although I have been a Republican all of my life, I am tremendously relieved and pleased that you were elected."

The rest of Teddy's kids stayed in rank, doing everything they could to make Franklin and Eleanor's life miserable. Alice went on the conservative Washington circuit, doing her nasty Eleanor imitation; Ted went public with his condemnation of FDR's policies, saying at one speech in 1935, "You are destroying the country, morally and spiritually and ruining it materially." Right after FDR took us off the gold standard, Alice showed up at a White House function dripping in gold jewelry.

As we moved toward the Second World War, Ted wrote to his sister, "Like you I am bitterly fearful of Franklin, I am confident he is itching to get into the situation partly as a means of bolstering himself and partly because of his megalomania."

During his campaign for his third presidency, a reporter asked Alice Roosevelt about voting for FDR; she screamed, "I'd rather vote for Hitler." That quote was reported nationally.

Now, up to that point, in spite of all of the bad blood in the Roosevelt family, Teddy's kids had still been invited to White House functions. Finally, FDR and Eleanor had had enough. With the exception of Kermit Roosevelt, the rest of Teddy's kids would end up being consigned to the dustbin of history. But, had the Teapot Dome oil scandal not unfairly tarnished the reputation of Ted Roosevelt, he likely would have been the one who one day became president, and FDR likely would not have fought back from his incapacitation from polio, knowing Ted was unstoppable.

But, then again, what if Teddy's kids hadn't treated young Eleanor so badly when she was a child? She took those horrible childhood memories and made sure her cousins never got a break as adults.

59. And Other Crazy Presidential Moments

Now that a very contentious election is over, I thought it might be fun to take a walk down memory lane. Let's look at some former American presidents, just to remind ourselves that our past wasn't always the way we imagine it was.

Zachary Taylor, thought to be one of the great moralists of the Oval Office, was elected in 1849, just as the debate was heating up about slavery in America. Now, Taylor well understood that virtually every other country in the world had already outlawed holding and owning slaves, including countries that were much less developed than we were. And there's little doubt that Zachary Taylor also wanted the United States out of the slave business. There was just one little problem: Taylor himself owned slaves. And he knew that it just wouldn't look good, to the world or his fellow Americans, for that matter, if his participation in crime became known.

So, Taylor wrestled with his conscience and came up with the only fair and decent thing for him to do: He hid his slaves in the attic of the White House during his stay in Washington.

Franklin Pierce may have been the first of our presidents to employ a PR flack to help him get elected. One of his closest friends was the novelist Nathaniel Hawthorne, author of such classics as The Scarlet Letter and The House of the Seven Gables. During the 1852 campaign, Hawthorne created a biography of Pierce that made him appear to be a cross between a patron saint and King Richard the Lionhearted. Now, what Pierce already had going for him was that he was unbelievably handsome, and between his good looks and Hawthorne's prose about him, well, he won the election. Which is amusing, considering that in real life he was a decent looking lifelong loser, possibly even a coward during his service in the war with Mexico.

Then again, it's a good thing that the biography of him didn't include much about his wife Jane, who was certifiably nuts. Mostly she suffered from severe depression, which kept her out of the public eye. The depression had set in when she lost her son; she wore black most of the time and would sit around writing long letters to her child, trying to relieve her pain.

Unable to deal with his wife's condition, Pierce started hitting the bottle, lightly at first, then more heavily as the strains of his marriage and the White House wore on him. Eventually he was arrested, incoherent and slobbering, riding a horse in the middle of the night in Washington. Once it was discovered just who had been arrested, the charges were dropped.

Andrew Johnson assumed the presidency after the assassination of Abraham Lincoln. He was another who had a real problem dealing with the demands of being president. Particularly, he was caught in a crossfire - both trying to put this nation back together after the Civil War and fighting a Congress that was hell-bent on punishing the South as hard and often as possible for starting the war to begin with.

Adding to Johnson's problems was the fact that his daughter Martha Patterson could no more stand the number of mice living in the White House than the radical Republicans in Congress could stand the thought that one day the South might rise again financially. Martha put out poisons, brought cats home by the dozen and set traps for the mice. However, Andrew Johnson, finding one of the survivors of Martha's attacks, set out flour by his fireplace for the mice to eat. In time, all sorts of food and water were left for the White House mice. Johnson is the only president known to have been a mouse rancher while in office.

We should back up for a moment and discuss gay marriage versus civil unions, because that battle was fought all the way back in 1857, when James Buchanan was elected President. Why? Because, even though there wasn't even a term for it yet, Buchanan appears to have been American's first gay president. I kid you not.

Buchanan had never married. But he lived for years with Alabama Senator Rufus King, and the two were inseparable. In fact, Andrew Jackson had always referred to Senator Rufus King as Miss Nancy, which was the common slang for a gay man at the time. Tennessee Representative Aaron Brown wrote to James K. Polk about King and Buchanan, calling King Aunt Fancy, and Buchanan's better half and his wife.

However, the two men were torn apart in 1844, when President Tyler appointed King our minister to France. Buchanan, devastated and lonely, wrote to a friend, "I am now solitary and alone, having no companion in the house with me. I have gone a wooing to several gentlemen, but have not succeeded with any of them. I feel that it is not good for a man to be alone and should not be astonished to find myself married to some old maid, who can nurse me when I am sick, provide good dinners for me when I am well, and not expect from me any ardent or romantic affection."

For a short period, King would be vice president under Franklin Pierce, but would pass away before boyfriend Buchanan was elected president.

Although he most assuredly was straight, one other president was considered effeminate and prissy, at least by his biographer, W. E. Woodward. That man was none other than Ulysses S. Grant. True enough, even during the Civil War he used a private closed tent to shower in, didn't like for anyone to see him naked. Foul language startled him, often to the point of blushing. And when, as President, Grant was told that his personal secretary was involved in stealing liquor taxes, instead of saying anything, he simply broke down crying uncontrollably.

Grover Cleveland, first elected to the presidency in 1885, then again in 1893, was forced to admit while running for the office that he had fathered a child out of wedlock. However, that didn't seem to hurt his chances of winning at all, because Cleveland had also proven he was tough on crime. As the sheriff of Erie County, New York, in the 1870s, he actually hanged a few of his prisoners himself.

William McKinley juggled the demands of the Presidency, while at the same time taking care of his semi-invalid wife, a woman crippled by excruciating migraine headaches, leading to epileptic fits. McKinley would often drop all matters of state in order to take his wife Ida out for afternoon walks, hoping the fresh air would in some way help her condition. In fact, he never once complained about having to spend so much time in helping his life mate get through her tortuous days.

However, his love and devotion to her was sometimes misunderstood when he couldn't dismiss himself from present company. One night at a formal dinner, McKinley was sitting next to Ida when William Howard Taft begged him for a pencil to make notes of the situation they were discussing. At that moment Ida McKinley went into a severe epileptic seizure. Without missing one word of his sentence, McKinley simply put his table napkin over Ida's head, and carried on his conversation with his dinner guests. Once her seizure ended, Ida took the napkin off of her head and finished her dinner as if nothing had happened.

William Howard Taft became president in 1909, and he also had a health problem: Taft could fall asleep anytime and anywhere. He thought it had to do with his incredible weight, but, as we know today, he may well have suffered from narcolepsy.

Taft managed to fall asleep while in the front row of a state funeral. He fell asleep in a car in New York during a campaign parade, fell asleep during the first act of the opening of the opera season in Washington, and often fell asleep while listening to the Victrola with friends.

There was nothing particularly humorous about Woodrow Wilson, a rather dour individual who may have felt he was ordained by God to be president at that particular time in American history. Wilson was also one who held a grudge against virtually anyone who ever disagreed with him; in fact, he almost seemed to have a misguided sense of superiority.

But he was almost like a schoolboy when he felt in love the second time around with Mrs. Edith Galt. We know this from the letters he wrote her at the time. One read, "You are so vivid, so beautiful. How deep I have drunk of the sweet fountains of love that are in you, how full of life and every sweet perfection."

Now, before you think I'm being a little hard on Wilson for being romantic in his letter writing to Ms. Galt, his Secret Service Agents thought it strange when they'd be out and about with the president and he'd start talking about Edith and break into the chorus of a 1911 song, "Oh, you beautiful doll, you great big beautiful doll."

Right before the two married during his first term in office, by mistake the Washington Post spilled the beans about just how close the widow and the presidential widower had become. On the front page of the Post in 1915 was supposed to be this line, "The president spent much of the evening entertaining Mrs. Galt." Instead the Post printed, "The president spent much of the evening entering Mrs. Galt."

And there you have it, almost a century of American presidents, all flawed but voted into office nonetheless. I wonder if any of them could get elected today.

60. A Partial Federal Republic

For whatever reason, the presidential election of 2000 caused the entire nation to be riveted to our television sets and radios, wondering if democracy had somehow failed us. Or whether the election might possibly have been stolen. Still others loudly complained that the day of the Electoral College needed to be brought to an end.

One thing is for sure, people kept saying, this isn't what our Founding Fathers planned for our presidential elections. Repeatedly, I heard the opinion voiced that somehow we'd forgotten our Founders' wisdom on how elections should be held. Oh, we'd forgotten our past all right. For our Founding Fathers didn't want everyone involved in the presidential election process to begin with. Nor did our Founding Fathers want the Electoral College to cast the deciding votes on who would run our country as president.

It's true. Long before the term "dimpled chad" came into our vernacular, those men who gave us the Constitution believed that there was a far more dangerous voting irregularity to fear in each election: the voters.

Here's how our Founding Fathers believed presidential elections would proceed: First, the voters would not be bright enough to pick the right person for the job each time. But, no worry, because the Electoral College would take over. However, that could be politically corrupted; therefore, the Founders believed, the votes from both the public and the Electoral College would so often be so close, or in dispute, that the House of Representatives would usually be called on to decide the presidential election's outcome.

As proof of that statement, James Madison is reported to have stood and told the Constitutional Convention that the system they had set up would throw the election to the House nine out of 10 times.

George Mason, also at that convention, thought Madison was an optimist; Mason had it figured that the House would decide the presidential elections 49 out of 50 times.

Now, before you doubt that our Founding Fathers had this little faith in the electorate, keep in mind that these were the guys who decided that you shouldn't be able to vote for federal judges, much less for those appointed to the Supreme Court. Those positions were just too important for votes from people like you and me to be counted in filling them. No, those appointments would come from the president, and as we just stated, the Founding Fathers thought the House would decide who that person would be.

You may not recall this, but originally senators also weren't voted into office by the public; they were appointed by each State's governor. Now, if they were trying to set up this country be a true democracy, the boys that drafted our Constitution sure kept a lot of important offices out of the reach of the average person's votes.

Certainly, some of you listening believe that George Bush's presidency is somehow clouded, the results tainted by partisan political figures' controlling the outcome of the votes in the Sunshine State. Well, how do you feel about George Washington's presidency? He entered office under similar circumstances.

It was 1789, and we were about to elect our first president by popular vote. Washington was actually our ninth president, but he was the first elected by public vote and the first to serve a four-year term. In any case, everyone knew that Washington was a shoo-in for the job. The problem at the time wasn't in Florida; it was in New York State. Up there the battle over how the Electoral College would vote got ugly; the Federalists in the New York Senate and the anti-Federalists in the New York Assembly violently disagreed on what electors New York should send to the Electoral College and how they should cast their presidential votes.

So George Washington was put into office with no one representing New York State in the Electoral College, though the popular vote there had gone in Washington's favor.

But don't feel bad; those same Federalists and anti-Federalists in New York also fought over the nominations for their two Senators. Again, they couldn't reach a conclusion, so during the very first session of Congress, New York went without representation in the Senate. Hillary's being elected kind of makes you wish for the good ol' days when New York didn't have any Senators at all, doesn't it?

Finally, for those of you still sure that Florida's voting irregularities signaled something very wrong, here's something for your thought processes to chew on. Imagine if you will that the popular vote put you in office. The other side protested that there were irregularities in the voting, but you know you won, if only they'd count all the votes. Sound familiar?

The problem is that your opponent managed to get so many of your votes thrown out as these so-called voting irregularities that in the end he won, in spite of the fact that more people voted for you. Think we're talking about Gore and Bush? Think again. I just described the first gubernatorial race in New York State, in 1792.

John Jay won the popular vote, George Clinton cried voter irregularity and, in this case, Clinton got enough votes thrown out to have himself declared the winner.

There's an old saying that if you forget the lessons of history, you are doomed to repeat its mistakes. Certainly that was the case in Florida this past November. Not once did any of us hear that our Founding Fathers really hadn't wanted the public or the Electoral College to determine our president. Not once did any of us hear that George Washington took office without anyone seated or voting in the Electoral College on behalf of New York.

And certainly no one mentioned that crying "voting irregularities" was how George Clinton managed to have enough votes thrown out to take an election away from John Jay in New York in 1792 - or that those voting irregularities boiled down to nothing more than who drove one county's votes to the Capital to be tallied.

Now, if we could just get New York to give up their senators for this Congress, like they did in 1789; Hillary would be out, but we'd have it made.

61. He Improved With Age

Today it seems we're harder on our nation and its leaders than we have been at any other time in our history. That attitude may be a mistake, but it's based on our widespread, honest belief that those who led us in the past were nearly perfect individuals. It never crosses our minds that maybe, just maybe, the people we worship most in our past made quite a few mistakes - and then came back to greatness.

That's certainly the case with George Washington, probably the most decent of our Founding Fathers. But, most Americans don't know that Washington was not our first choice to head the Continental Army, possibly because of his previous screw-ups in the French and Indian War.

Before being commissioned as a Major in the Virginia militia, Washington had never once been in uniform. And he got his commission because he was willing to undertake a mission no sane individual would tackle. It started out when the Virginia powers that were in Williamsburg decided that they needed to know what the French were up to in the Western Territories. Among those who had land interests there were the Ohio Company - and Washington's brother, Lawrence, and Lawrence's in-laws, the Fairfaxes: The Fairfax family held a half-million-acre land grant there.

Washington volunteered for the job. He was given the position, possibly because the wealthy of Virginia thought it would be a safe bet: If things got out of hand, about all they stood to lose was this gung-ho kid. Washington took one guide, four woodsmen and a couple of interpreters. He was told that if he ran into trouble, he should find some friendly Indians to help him out.

This trip presented few problems, and Washington came back safely with the information that the French had built forts in the disputed territory. The Virginians, upset that the French had laid claim to land given them by the Crown of England, promoted Washington to Lt. Colonel, gave him a small group of soldiers and sent him back to inform the French that they were trespassing on others' property.

Now the mistakes happened. At one point on this second mission, Washington found that he'd led his troops smack into the middle of a much larger force of both French and French allied Indians.

You might say he was unnerved. So, taking the advice of his top Indian guide, Washington and his 40 men attacked the French at night. Ten of his men were killed and the rest captured. Washington wrote of this mission, "I heard the bullets whistle, and believe me; there is something charming in the sound." Maybe there was, but there was nothing charming about the results.

First, Britain and France were not then at war. They were after this attack, because one of the 10 men killed by Washington was Joseph Coulon, a French diplomat who had been sent to demand that the British leave France's property. That's right: Washington had shot a French ambassador on a diplomatic mission.

Worse yet, there was another battle - and this one cost the lives of more than 100 Virginians. The French had more than 1,000 soldiers in the area, and they could have wiped Washington and his forces out. But they didn't. Enter the Second Mistake: The local French commander, who happened to be the brother of the slain ambassador, sent word that he would allow safe passage of Washington's remaining men back to Virginia, if he would only sign a statement that the situation was a mere mistake and that the two groups wanted peace. Washington signed the document, but it was written in French, which he couldn't read, much less understand.

What Washington had signed was an admission of guilt. The document read that the French had only fired on him to avenge the assassination of their diplomat.

That was an international incident. Kings and rulers across the Continent were talking about this idiot Lt. Colonel, who had fired on a foreign power at night, during a time of peace. No one could believe that Washington had been so stupid as to sign a document admitting he'd killed an ambassador on a peaceful mission.

The French and Indian War started, but Washington's Virginia forces were broken up. Washington had hoped that his forces would be made part of the British army and he would lead them. Not to be; the British didn't give commissions higher than captain to their subjects in America. Washington resigned and went home.

Still, in spite of his grievous mistakes, Washington came back our hero. It almost didn't happen.

It should be remembered that our Revolution started out in a mess. No money, no army, and no real commitment from our people to break away from England. That didn't come until after the first year of the Revolution.

And the members of the Continental Congress knew who they wanted to head our army. The very wealthy John Hancock, Congressional president and a man with no military experience, was their choice. But Hancock was from New England, which didn't sit well with the Southerners. What, problems between the North and South at that early date? In a word, yes.

Then the Congress thought that General Charles Lee would be their pick, or General Horatio Gates. Both had serious military backgrounds; the problem here was that neither was American born, and the Congress decided that no foreigner should lead our armies.

Leave it to John Adams to suggest Washington for the job. From Virginia, he was palatable to both the North and the South. It's to Washington's credit that he took the assignment, for he was in for eight years of living hell.

Much has been made of the fact that Washington turned down the $500-a-month pay he was offered to help win our independence. It was an unbelievable amount of money in that time, especially when you consider that army captains made just $20 a month. And Washington wouldn't take a penny in compensation for acting as our military leader. No, he opted for simple reimbursement for expenses.

Here's how that worked out. If Washington had taken the $500 a month, we would have paid him around $48,000. Instead, we reimbursed him for expenses totaling $447,220.92. That figure included $131.11 to have

his false teeth fixed and $27,665.30 in travel expenses - for Martha Washington to come and visit from time to time. Makes you wonder what she rode in.

Still, no one complained, as we won the war. But what if we had lost or come to a stalemate? We'd still be talking about how Washington screwed up and started the French and Indian War, and discussing how he tried to bilk us on his expense report during the Revolution.

That's America. When we win, we don't complain about the small stuff.

62. The Golden Age of Education?

If I seem to find few things more amusing than stories concerning the failure of our education system here in America - particularly the non-stop entertainment provided by the Dallas School Board - it's because I have some historical perspective that the news media lack.

Everyone seems to believe that somehow, fairly recently, the education of our youth has slipped; it's no longer the marvelous education we remember receiving when we were younger. Additionally, the teenage dropout rate boggles our imagination: "My God, somehow we are failing every child and family in this country because we are incapable of teaching our children basic skills." Even the new president wants to commit us to some type of educational voucher system, simply because we've gotten off the track educationally.

We all act as if we honestly believe that there was once a golden age of education in this country: A time when an immigrant child could be fed into our school system, ignorant of the English language, and come out a productive member of society. Such a child might even have done well enough to wind up a member of the upper class, a doctor, a lawyer, or owner of a large corporation, back in that golden age.

So, when was this golden age of education? Like so much "history" we believe today ... it never existed.

Of course, many children did well in schools back in the good old days. Most kids, however, did so badly that they never graduated. Doubt that?

Let's start with the first real renaissance in modern society: the 1920s and '30s. A period when we moved off the farms and into the cities, this was when our modern middle class was born.

A federal study of school-aged children, conducted in Chicago, New York, Boston, Detroit, Philadelphia and

Pittsburgh in that period, concluded that children across the board could not read, write or do arithmetic at the grade level they held. Odd: I thought that statement was only true today.

Furthermore, between 1919 and 1940 only 56% of all children attending school graduated. That's right, 44% of all students nationwide failed to make it all the way through high school. And some cities did worse than that national figure: New York, for example, managed to get only 40% of its children to successfully finish high school.

It was bad in the '20s; a meager 19% - almost two out of every 10 kids - entering Philadelphia high schools stuck it out and got diplomas. It wasn't much better by the 1940s: Only half of the kids who formed Boston's 9th-grade classes would walk capped and gowned through graduation and commencement ceremonies.

Of course, we've been talking about school problems in the city. Turns out that reformers have been complaining about inner-city school problems as far back as we can research. From the turn of the century through the '40s, New York City schools more often than not were rat-infested cesspools. And if you think classes are overcrowded today, you should have tried learning in the 60- to 70-child classrooms that weren't unusual 80 years ago.

As they do now, politicians back then promised action. "Education must be improved if we are to improve the nation" was the cry each and every election year. Some things never change.

But wait, you say; maybe we're not going back far enough to find that golden age of education. Maybe it didn't exist in the last century at all; maybe if we went back even farther - like, say, the 1890s - we'd find it right there in plain sight.

Okay, let's go there. In the last decade of the 19th century, federal statistics show, only 50% of American children ever went to school at all - that is, white children. Seven out of every 10 black children in that

decade never even got a chance to attend the first day of school. This doesn't look like a golden age to me, does it to you?

Maybe we still haven't gone back far enough, or to the right institution. So let's try Harvard; after all, that name's been at the top of the educational food chain for over 350 years.

Let's see: For more than a century your grades at Harvard depended on your family's social standing. I don't know that that's changed to this day.

A teacher there in the mid-1800s complained about the workload and about having to teach classes on subjects he knew nothing about. Henry Adams, who was a professor there, once wrote to a friend, "There is a pleasing excitement, in having to lecture tomorrow on a period of history that I have not heard of till today." Those teachers' pay? When Charles Eliot took over Harvard in 1869 he commented, "Very few Americans of eminent abilities become college teachers. For the pay is too low." Henry Ward Beecher said it best: "A man that teaches cannot afford to know too much."

By default, then, you'd have to assume that those of us who grew up in the '60s and '70s must have been the ones who benefited from the golden age of education. Wrong again.

Most of us grew up with the Encyclopedia Britannica as the basis of all knowledge. However, as children we weren't informed about how accurate it was - or was not. In 1958, learned historian Harvey Einbinder did a study of the ultimate books of knowledge and found that many of the major essays in the edition then current were 40 years or more out of date. Many of the biographies were at least 75 years old. Cities in Poland hadn't been updated since 1931; many no longer existed, and all showed a huge Jewish population, despite Hitler's having changed all of that some 15 years earlier.

And speaking of "completely outdated:" How many of us from the '60s and '70s took computer science? The computer had been invented 20 years earlier, and most major corporations had been using them for at least a decade. And we knew in the '60s that computers were our future — after all, that's how we got a man on the moon! Yet computer science was rarely taught, and it certainly wasn't mandatory.

Next time you're laughing at the Dallas School Board, remember what you learned in this little history lesson.

When you worry that somehow we are failing our children with our educational system, reflect that history tells us we're doing no worse than our predecessors did - sometimes better. But it you are desperate to go back to the good old days, please find out for the rest of us when exactly the golden age of education existed.

Until somebody can prove it existed, I'm going to call it an Urban Legend.

63. Chain, Chain Chains

Before today's story, I'd like to point out one thing: Not one member of my family emigrated to the United States before 1867. My point is that absolutely no one in my family was on either side of the issue of slavery in this country. We didn't live in the South and we didn't live in the North.

However, by studying our history to determine how we arrived at this point in this time, I've found one aspect of slavery that I think has in fact turned out to be a good thing for this country: Slavery is the only thing in our history about which we have a collective conscience - and it misgives us.

Doubt that? Name one other aspect of American history about which we even question our rightness. We all know and agree now, however, that slavery was absolutely wrong. Right? Now name anything else you learned that America has done or condoned that you've personally concluded was the wrong thing.

Maybe the Viet Nam war, but that's still in debate; I would guess that in 100 years, history books will have reduced that whole war down to one line in a high-school history book. It will read: The war in Viet Nam was poorly thought out, ending in a stalemate at the cost of many lives. But even 100 years from now, most Americans will still believe that the ownership of human beings by fellow Americans was inexcusable, unconscionable, and just flat wrong. The way I think of it, America's conscience has its soul in African American history.

Now, name something else that makes us wonder, as a nation, whether it was the right thing to do. How about the Mexican American war? Nah - even though Ulysses S. Grant, who fought in it, called it "the most unjust war ever fought since the beginning of time."

No one questions the Spanish American war, though it was little more than a land grab. Or the war against the Filipinos right afterward - which gave us control of those islands. How about the rise of unions? They created our middle class, yet somehow that's been twisted into a bad thing. You see, that's the point: We are taught that everything we've done as a nation has been exactly the right thing to do, each and every time - with the exception of slavery.

And in order to have a conscience, you have to know right from wrong. Simple enough: If America had never done anything wrong, as in slavery, how would we know what was right? The answer is that we wouldn't. The undeniable fact that we once allowed slavery gives us that balance.

There is one little aspect of slavery about which popular history needs to be corrected: Abraham Lincoln's real feelings on the subject. It needs to be corrected not just for our own history, but for African American history. The fact is, at some point Lincoln did want the slaves to be freed - and then he wanted them to be deported. Lincoln didn't believe in equality between the races, and he didn't believe that both groups could ever co-exist in this country.

Now, we all know about the Lincoln-Douglas debates in 1858. But what did the two men say? That's right, we know from high school that they debated, and we don't have a clue what was said. This from Lincoln in Ottawa, Illinois: "I have no purpose to introduce political and social equality between the white and black races. There is a physical difference between the two, which, in my judgment, will probably forever forbid their living together upon the footing of perfect equality."

Of course Lincoln's statement makes sense only if you know that Illinois, Lincoln's home state, had amended its state constitution to forbid blacks from even entering the state.

But, by those debates in 1858, Lincoln already had a master plan: Colonization. Or the "anywhere but here" theory. The most logical place was Liberia, in western Africa, set up decades earlier by the American Colonization Society as a place to repatriate blacks from this country.

During the Civil War, Lincoln met with black leaders at the White House, begging them to start an exodus of their people back to Africa - Liberia, to be exact.

On December 1st, 1862, Lincoln spoke to Congress and said, "I cannot make it better known than it already is, that I strongly favor colonization."

Well, everybody may have known Lincoln's feelings then, but does anyone today realize that he wanted all the blacks to leave this country? I didn't think so: We still refer to Lincoln as the Great Emancipator. Few people think of Lincoln as the Great Deporter. Yet that same year, 1862, when Washington, D. C., outlawed slavery in the District, Congress approved $600,000 for that proverbial one-way ticket to the promised land.

However, our federal coffers were a little light due to the on-going Civil War. Lincoln started working on other ideas - cost-saving measures, as it were. Lincoln asked James Mitchell, the former leader of the American Colonization Society, to become Commissioner of Emigration and to draw up plans to send all the blacks in this country to Guiana, the West Indies, Honduras or Ecuador.

Caleb Smith, our Secretary of the Interior, was also working on similar plans at Lincoln's request. Senator Samuel Pomeroy, also working on the idea, suggested a Central American colony for the blacks, to be named Linconia.

William Lloyd Garrison, America's most famous abolitionist at the time, said this about the Emancipator, "President Lincoln may colonize himself if he choose, but it is an impertinent act, on his part, to propose the getting rid of those who are surely as good as himself."

Secretary of State William Seward, the man who got us Alaska, said that the motive of those who protested against the extension of slavery had "always really been of concern for the welfare of the white man, and not an unnatural sympathy for the Negro."

New York Tribune editor Horace Greeley, whom you remember as having said, "Go West, young man!" explained what he meant by it: "All the unoccupied territory shall be preserved for the benefit of the

white Caucasian race, a thing which cannot be except by the exclusion of slavery and the Negro."

I hate to confuse everybody, because we were all raised believing that it was the enlightened Northerners, led by Abraham Lincoln, who managed to get the nation to do the right thing by freeing the slaves. But the more you find out about the things they wrote and said, the more they come off looking more racist than the South, if that's possible.

So, who was responsible for turning things around for African Americans? With the exception of a few farsighted white guys, and yes there were some, it was the blacks themselves. And because of that, today we are more tolerant than history says we've ever been. Probably still have a ways to go, but "I don't think we're in the 1950s anymore, Toto."

That's a good thing. Black leaders and men of substance, from George Washington Carver to Martin Luther King to Colin Powell and thousands of others, have contributed to America greatly. Had Lincoln lived, it is possible that his plans to deport blacks might have gone through; imagine how much we would have lost. Still, slavery in this country is the only thing we openly admit was a national wrong. Therefore it is the only thing that verifies that we have a collective conscience - except for the Civil Rights movement. Suddenly we all questioned slavery again, and wondered at our lack of progress over the century since it had been outlawed. And because we questioned our performance on civil rights, suddenly we knew about Japanese internment during the war, radiation experiments on citizens, mind-control tests by the CIA and so on. We looked at just one issue and found many American mistakes, mistakes we promised we'd never make again.

America grew because we questioned who we were and why we were that way. And if slavery had never happened, our history books would say everything we'd ever done was right. Think of the arrogance of that, and think how many more mistakes we would have made and kept making because of that arrogance.
As for Lincoln, maybe it is time to get rid of the penny. After all, most people know a penny isn't worth much anymore, either.

64. The African Prince a Slave

As early as 200 years after the birth and death of Mohammed, the Islamic faith had been established across Northern Africa. Over the next few centuries Islam would be carried into the interior of that country by Berber traders, and by the start of the 1700s it had arrived in Futa Jalon, today part of Guinea.
In the early centuries of that religion's existence, most centers of Muslim faith held schools for the education of children as a key part of the faith's doctrine. Along with commerce. And yes, from time to time, a little Jihad against the infidels.

One such Islamic uprising in Futa Jalon, led by one Ibrahim Sori, was a jihad was against Futa Jalon's repressive rulers. More or less, Sori freed his people; in turn, they chose him as their Almami, or tribal leader. Of course, the west coast of Africa in the 1700s was also a hotbed for the thriving slave trade. And while it is true that European slave traders captured and sold thousands of Africans into slavery, it appears that the education and mercantile sensibilities of the Muslims in Futa Jalon offered them at least some sense of protection.

Sori was a beloved leader. The birth in 1762 of his son, Abd al-Rahman Ibrahima, was celebrated everywhere in the small nation.

In 1774, Ibrahima was sent to study at the Islamic schools in Timbuktu, and he became a serious student of the Koran. By the end of his teenage years, Ibrahima was leading his father's troops into battle, defeating his father's sworn enemy in an important 1781 battle.

Now, before you think that this Muslim culture lead by Sori and his son was intent on non-stop warring, that same year members of the Futa Jalon tribe found an English surgeon, John Coates Cox, wandering through the African bush. Lost from a hunting party, he was sick and near death.

The good British doctor was taken to the home of Sori, and there he stayed for the next half-year, recovering. Dr. Cox became good friends with Ibrahima.

The doctor returned to England. Seven years later, Ibrahima was assigned by his father to put down an

uprising; a few coastal villagers were interfering with his nation's trade. It would be the last time that Ibrahima would ever see his father.

For those villagers ambushed him, knowing that if they killed the young prince Sori would forever seek revenge. So, instead, they sold young Ibrahima to slave traders working in the area.

Just two months later, in August of 1788, a ship pulled up to the docks at Natchez, Mississippi, then still part of Spanish territory, with two slaves being offered for sale. One was the educated, Islamic royal, Ibrahima; the other was named Samba. And both men were sold to Thomas Foster, a local dirt farmer, for the incredible sum of $930.

Of course, at first there was bound to be some trouble. Ibrahima still was a member of an African royal family, while Foster thought little more of him than he did any other slave.

Ibrahima refused to go out into the field. He was furious when Foster cut his royal hair, though it took a number of men to hold him down to do it.

Needless to say, Foster whipped Ibrahima often; and after one such beating, Ibrahima took off for the woods. Now, in his place, you would soon realize that your situation was hopeless. Non-white in a country of white strangers, an ocean away from your real family. And no way to get back home.

Ibrahima thought about his situation and came to the conclusion that Allah had put this crisis into his life to test his faith. So, after two weeks of prayer about what to do, Ibrahima returned to the home of Thomas Foster, who was absent at the time, kneeled in front of his wife Sarah, put her foot on his neck, signaling his submission, and began his life of slavery.

Foster, on his return, realized there had been a transformation in Ibrahima. In turn, he would be made the foreman of the slaves on Foster's expanding farm. Foster, having heard the stories that Ibrahima was actually of royal blood, took to calling him Prince.

And for the next 19 years, praying to Allah for his deliverance every day, Ibrahima — Prince — ran his master's farm.

Maybe it was coincidence, or maybe Allah heard his prayers, but in 1807, a British doctor was riding in the streets of Washington, Mississippi. It was John Coates Cox, the same doctor Cox whose life had been saved by Sori and his son Ibrahima.

Cox had emigrated to America shortly after Ibrahima was sold into slavery; and by chance that day, Ibrahima saw the doctor as he rode by and called out his name. Dr. Cox flew off his horse and embraced the now middle-aged Prince. More than that, he offered Foster a thousand dollars for Ibrahima so he could return him to his family in Futa Jalon. Foster refused, claiming Ibrahima was too fine a worker to let go at any price.

However, the people of Natchez soon found out about their royal slave through the stories told of his family and his country back in Africa. And for the next nine years, Dr. Cox made constant attempts to free the man who had once saved him, all to no avail. When Cox died in 1816, his son took up Ibrahima's cause.

The stories of his life in Africa, his education, his religious feelings and his royal bloodline finally made the Mississippi State Gazette, courtesy of its editor, Andrew Marschalk. When he read them, Thomas B. Reed, then a senator, enlisted the aid of John Quincy Adams' secretary of state, Henry Clay. Now, Clay had already gotten a letter from the King of Morocco, who had read the stories of Ibrahima's fate in slavery and asked for his release. Monies were offered for Ibrahima's freedom by the King of Morocco.

Clay sent that request to John Foster, and this time, Foster did the right thing. He freed Ibrahima and his wife, refusing all compensation for doing so. However, the now 64-year-old Ibrahima had still spent almost forty years as a slave.

Besides, Foster didn't free his children or grandchildren. So, instead of returning home, for the next two years Ibrahima lectured on our East Coast, trying to raise the money to buy his children's freedom. His story was so passionate that on May 15th, 1828, Ibrahima was granted an audience with President John Quincy Adams. Later that year he sailed for Liberia, with his wife and five children. When he got there, he hoped, he would raise enough money to buy the freedom of the rest of his family.

He arrived ill from his voyage, but word quickly spread back to Futa Jalon, still ruled by his family: Their long-lost relative was home, safe in Liberia, but needed money to buy the rest of his family's freedom. Quickly, seven thousand dollars in gold was put together to pay John Foster in Mississippi, and a caravan left

to bring their Prince back to his own country.

But, at 67 years of age, after decades of slavery, the Prince never recovered his health. On July 6th, 1829, Abd al Rahman Ibrahima, Prince, died in Liberia.

Word spread quickly throughout the west coast of Africa. On hearing the news, the royal caravan coming to save their Prince and free his remaining family in slavery simply turned around.
Ibrahima's remaining children and grandchildren remained in slavery on John Foster's farm.

65. The Debate Remains the Same

A few years ago I met up with Pat Buchanan, who was in town promoting his latest book, *Death of the West*. The premise of this book is the imminent end of American civilization as we know it, caused by allowing too many immigrants into this country.

Of course, many conservatives today believe this is true, that good ol' Americanism is about to become extinct, replaced by multiculturalism. It's a shame that not one of these people knows anything about the history of immigration to this country. If they did, they'd know that the current wave of newly acquired Americans has happened before. And they'd know that 100 years ago the complaint was exactly the same and just as common, that somehow all these immigrants would ruin America's neighborhood.

First, as we've reported before, the second wave of immigration to America started after our Civil War ended. Unlike those who got here before that conflict, the second wave of immigrants came from Eastern Europe and Italy. Meaning, they weren't white Anglo-Saxon Protestants.

At the time, they caused widespread fear and uneasiness. No one understood the languages they spoke, no one understood their cultural differences; worst of all, this group of immigrants was a demanding lot. No longer were they willing to buy farmland and live apart, amongst themselves; no, this time they moved into the cities, looking for those high-paying factory jobs they'd been told America offered in abundance. Those jobs, of course, didn't exist. But that's why those people had come here to begin with, so they fought for better pay, better living conditions and so on. Things that you and I take today for granted.

However, once America became perceived as a superpower after the Spanish American War, the floodgates of immigration opened wide. How much so? Consider this: From 1900 to 1930 so many new people came to America that by the start of the Great Depression, 25% of our population was either immigrants or their children. Can you imagine one out of every four people living here today being a first-generation, fresh-from-foreign-shores immigrant? Well, that was the percentage in our grandparents' time.

Three things made that mass migration not just possible but urgent. First, the original myth that every job in America was high paying, which just wasn't true. Second, with the advent of the steamship, it no longer took weeks to cross the Atlantic to get here - just seven to 10 days, and the trip cost 1/10 what it had a few decades earlier. Finally, the moving assembly line, or mass production, had been invented here. Now no skills at all were needed to find work; you didn't even have to know a trade to make your living here in the great United States of America. What a country!

However, few of these new arrivals spoke the English language. And so, like humans everywhere, they gathered in groups they could understand: In most American cities there were whole neighborhoods of nothing but Jewish families, or Italians, Polish, Russian or Hungarian ones. You could go block after block and never hear a word of English.

Yes, conservatives back then screamed just as loudly as they do today that immigrants were

going to destroy this country's moral fiber. They pointed out that criminal gangs, such as the Mafia, came out of the Italian ghettos, which prior to that had been the Jewish ghettos, which they had inherited from the Irish, but those complaining about foreign criminals were conveniently forgetting that Ma Barker's boys, Bonnie and Clyde and John Dillinger were all pure white, Anglo Protestant criminals who might never have met an immigrant.

Immigrants were commonly suspected to be the purveyors of Communism. Not that they were, of course, but they were the people screaming the loudest for fair pay for their work. So employers, not wanting to spend more in wages or on creating better working conditions, constantly told the media that these people were just the vanguard of the Communist influence in this country. It worked. Immigration was drastically curtailed in the mid-'20s.

No, we had a fear back then, and the fear was that somehow this wonderful American dream was going to be trashed by people we didn't understand - foreigners whom our government, in its bureaucratic ignorance, had stupidly allowed entrance to Paradise.

When you talk about the battles of labor for and management against unions, you're mostly talking about the immigrants' fight. When you hear about Roosevelt and his New Deal, what you're often hearing is a reference to government programs to help the poor - which were instituted to help recent immigrants.

So, what changed all of this? And why is it that today we've all forgotten that just 70 years ago, immigrants were the norm? Simple: The Second World War. Or, let's say a combination of the Second World War and Hollywood. Here's how it really happened.

Remember that the second wave of immigrants moved primarily to the cities to find work? One of their favorite stopping-off points was New York. And most of the men who ran Hollywood were either Jewish immigrants themselves or were the sons of Jewish immigrants; many of them had gotten their start on the East Coast.

During the Second World War, everyone did his or her bit for the country. The young men who enlisted came from every ethnic background imaginable. That was a good thing. The men who ran the movie studios, men such as Louis B. Mayer of MGM, Carl Leamme of Universal, William Fox, Harry Conn of Columbia and Adolph Zucker, founder of Paramount, Hollywood's first major studio, were all Jewish; they knew prejudice firsthand. So, in all those war movies made during the Second World War, did you ever notice that virtually every film shows a squad made up of one Italian kid, one Jewish boy, one Pole - sometimes even a Hispanic kid, usually played by Anthony Quinn? That wasn't an accident: The Jewish movie moguls purposely showed us young men of all ethnic backgrounds, fighting together for America and what we believed, starting during the Second World War. That habit continues to this day, with movies like Saving Private Ryan: One Italian New Yorker, one Jewish kid ... and so on.

Now, go look at some war movies made before the Second World War, and what ethnic makeup do you mainly see among the actors? That's right. Anglo Protestants. All by themselves, those Jewish filmmakers stopped the conservatives from complaining about the 18 million foreigners and their children that the Statue of Liberty welcomed from 1900 to 1925. Heck, no one could complain any longer that immigration was ruining everything us white guys believed in. It was right there on the movie screen: These immigrants' children were fighting and dying beside us to defend this country's principles. In fact, our national attitude about immigration changed so much that by

1964, immigration was again virtually wide open.

There are a few ironies to this story. Today, it seems that immigration is again a bad word. The grandchildren and great grandchildren of some of those immigrants - who have either forgotten or never learned their family's history - often complain about the number of immigrants to this country. That's not right.

Second, because it was Hollywood that changed our mind about the last wave of immigrants to America, how come not one street in Los Angeles is named for any of the great movie moguls, who created an industry and changed the way American looks at itself? Look it up. There's no Louis B. Mayer Avenue or Adolph Zucker Drive.

And finally, the next time you think that there are too many immigrants here today, remember that in 1930, one of every four people in America was an immigrant. We'd have to have 90 million of them living here today to have the same percentage.

66. With Liberty and Justice For All?

It has long been known that during the Second World War the United States government removed from the West Coast and interned Japanese Americans in concentration camps across the country. Even today, many individuals believe that was the wise and prudent thing to do, since Japan had attacked the United States, and no one could be sure of Japanese citizens' loyalties. Those same individuals seem conveniently to forget that Washington didn't feel it necessary to intern those whose ancestry was German or Italian.
Of course, it was racism run amok due to war hysteria. And in the course of events, it would not only change the lives of those it affected directly, but would in time change the entire course of American history. Most of you listening just haven't realized its importance.

Racism against those of Asian descent had been rampant in America since the building of the trans-continental railroad across the Sierra Nevada range of mountains. Chinese laborers had always been used for the hardest jobs in the most fearful conditions.

But by 1912, Japanese immigrants to this country were beginning to settle in and acquire property. By then Japanese farmers in California owned almost 13,000 acres of prime farmland. However, in 1913, the California Alien Land Law denied any alien who was ineligible for citizenship the right to own any land or property. At least the law left them the right to lease the property, but for no longer than a three-year period. For the most part, that law applied to the Japanese, as Asian immigrants were ineligible for citizenship at that time.

Seven years later, that law was amended; now Japanese immigrants were prohibited from even leasing the land. Apparently, the Californians' distrust of Japanese or Japanese Americans had started long before the First World War, not to mention the Second.

It should be remembered that those Japanese immigrants had had children; and their children born here were American citizens. By 1940, 126,947 Japanese were living in this country, and almost 63% of them were citizens by birth. By then, however, Europe was at war, and fear was starting to grip the nation.

November 26th, 1941, the very day that the Japanese fleet left to attack Pearl Harbor, President Roosevelt ordered Henry Field to create a list of every Japanese and Japanese American living in the United States. Field did not know why the President was in such a hurry for his census.

Field found out on December 7th, 1941. By the end of the day of the attack at Pearl Harbor, the FBI had arrested 737 Japanese Americans, on no better pretext than suspicion of being an enemy alien. Within four days the FBI had arrested a total of 1,370 Japanese Americans.

The anger toward the Japanese was just beginning; it was the Los Angeles Chamber of Commerce that started the internment hysteria rolling. For on December 22nd they recommended that all Japanese nationals be put under federal control. Leland Ford, a Congressman from LA, wrote to Secretary of State Cordell Hull. His letter read, in part, "I do not believe that we could be any too strict in our consideration of the

Japanese, in the face of the treacherous way in which they do things." By the end of January 1942, California had dismissed all civil workers who were, and I quote, "descendents of nations we are at war with." But only the Japanese were fired from their jobs.

On February 19th of 1942 President Roosevelt signed executive order 9066, authorizing the Secretary of War to designate military zones of exclusion for certain racial groups. The final stage of the period of American concentration camps was set. Even California Attorney General Earl Warren was solidly behind this movement to intern Japanese, regardless of their citizenship.

On March 6th the San Francisco News wrote an editorial suggesting to the Japanese Americans that the best way they could show they were loyal Americans was simply surrendering and leaving the state. Of course the irony is that loyal Americans love freedom; therefore, they should surrender nothing. But, that same editorial did point out something that has been overlooked in this rounding up of the Japanese: If anything should happen, such as sabotage on the West Coast, no law enforcement group could save these people from the actions of Caucasian mobs.

That part I don't doubt.

During the first half of March, Roosevelt created the War Relocation Authority. Milton Eisenhower, Ike's younger brother, was in charge of the removal of Japanese Americans from their homes and businesses.

Less than 90 days later, 110,000 Japanese and Japanese Americans were living in concentration camps.

The American Civil Liberties Union and the American Quaker Society were the only two groups to fight this illegal action. Neither won its legal battle.

And before you suggest that things weren't as bad in those camps as they might have been, there were cruelties. Two men were killed in the Lordsburg, New Mexico, camp for nothing more than being sick. But that's not the point: These individuals had lost everything they had worked for and built; the only thing they had left was their families and their culture. That's how they survived.

But, surprisingly, that's not what this story is about. It's about courage in the face of adversity.

You see, just as we were rounding up Japanese Americans, the Army created the 100th Infantry Battalion, which would be made up of Japanese Americans living in Hawaii, and it allowed Japanese American men who were on the intern list to join. In spite of what this country was doing to their families, 2,500 Japanese American men signed up on the first day to fight for this country.

And fight they did, first in North Africa and then in Italy. It was the 100th Infantry Battalion that rescued the Lost Battalion in Europe. Funny, we never see a war movie showing the Japanese Americans rescuing the Jews. The irony, of course, is that former prisons of an American concentration camp helped rescue Jews from a German concentration camp in America's name.

Twenty-one members of the 100th Infantry Battalion would receive the Congressional Medal of Honor. And that group of formerly interned Japanese Americans is almost completely written out of our military history.

During the war, 10 people were tried and convicted of spying for Japan — not one of them Japanese or Japanese American. All 10 were white male Americans.

But America was troubled by what it had done. In 1948 the Supreme Court struck down those California laws forbidding lien ownership of land. That same year, Congress passed legislation to compensate Japanese Americans for losses on their homes and businesses when they were forced into camps: They would

receive a whole ten cents on the dollar. And in 1952, Congress lifted the 1924 ban on Asian immigration.

Milton Eisenhower, the man responsible for the relocation, was forever haunted by what he had done. He wrote, “How could such a tragedy have occurred in a democratic society that prides itself on individual rights and freedoms?” Today his foundation looks for the causes and prevention of violence.

Earl Warren was also troubled by his hatred of the Japanese and his support for their internment. In fact, it changed him forever; when Dwight Eisenhower made him the Chief Justice of the Supreme Court, Ike thought he was putting a conservative in place. Warren did an about face and become a libertarian. Moreover, think of Warren’s most important decisions: They all had to do with forcing this nation to be less racist. Warren later said that allowing the Japanese to be interned was the worst thing he had done in his life. And as he left the Supreme Court in 1969, Warren also admonished us, “We face continued strife and upheaval if we fail to heed the rightful demands for equality.”

However, we would all do well to remember the 100th Infantry Battalion, the 12,500 Japanese Americans who fought for this country. They asked for nothing but the right to prove their loyalty. And while they fought, they sent letters home to their parents, locked up in concentration camps across America.

67. The Dark President

There is a side of Abraham Lincoln coming to light that one day may alter the way you view the most popular of our presidents. The fact is, Lincoln did more than anyone to destroy our Constitution, all in the name of saving the Republic. But historians are also uncovering another side of John Wilkes Booth, who assassinated Abraham Lincoln - and who claimed he did it to save our Republic.

Let’s start at the beginning. The Civil War was not fought over slavery, it was fought over States’ rights. Additionally, while today we believe that the South had no right to secede from the Union, hence the reason for the war, that’s not right, either. In 1860, no one questioned the right of a state or states to leave the Union. New England debated doing just that during the War of 1812, and no military forces suppressed those debates. In fact, even while the Civil War raged, West Point continued to teach secession law.

No, Lincoln was the first president we had elected who firmly believed in a strong centralized government. And once the Civil War started, Lincoln virtually threw away the Constitution of the United States in order to create his vision of our nation.

Of course you know that Lincoln suspended the Writ of Habeas Corpus; that much they taught us in school. But they left it there, with no explanation of what it really meant. Nor were we told that the Supreme Court ruled against Lincoln on this issue, claiming that only Congress had the right to suspend laws. Lincoln ignored the Court.

Before it was over, 13,000 Americans would be imprisoned without trial, and kept there for years on end, just for disagreeing with Lincoln’s position on the war.

Now, I find no fault with Lincoln’s first act, which was to arrest those in Baltimore who kept Northern troops from passing through their city to defend our Capitol. Those were desperate times, and they required desperate measures; seen in that perspective, many of Lincoln’s acts are at least understandable today. But 13,000 people, maybe more, arrested and never tried? That just isn’t right.

Let me give you three examples. First, Francis Key Howard, grandson of Francis Scott Key, the writer of The Star Spangled Banner. Howard, a newspaper editor, wrote an editorial about Lincoln’s decision to start the war without consulting Congress, as required by the Constitution, and his suspension of civil liberties. Howard found out firsthand the truth of what he’d written: He was arrested and held for two years without trial - ironically, at Fort McHenry, where his grandfather had written our national anthem.

Clement Vallandigham, a Congressman from Ohio, spoke against Lincoln’s income tax to fund the war at a Democratic Party Convention. He was arrested and exiled from America for doing so.

Lincoln wrote to General John Dix on May 18th, 1864, “You will take possession by military force, of the printing establishments of the New York World and Journal of Commerce and prohibit any further publication thereof. You are to arrest and imprison the editors, proprietors and publishers.”

Lincoln censored the mail, read all telegraph messages, had Federal troops interfere with Democratic elections and nationalized the railroads - and all this without the least bit of Constitutional authority. How? Lincoln was an attorney: He claimed to have found presidential powers in the Constitution that no other president before him had found.

Yes, most historians agree that Lincoln was a dictator; most, however, like him, so they claim he was a great and benevolent dictator. Tell that to the 13,000 Americans he imprisoned without benefit of a trial.

Also misunderstood by history is John Wilkes Booth - not that I believe what he did was right. Most people today believe that Booth was a Southern extremist and sympathizer, and that he shot Lincoln over his actions against the South during the war. That's not exactly right, either.

Today, you are led to believe that if someone sympathized with the South, he must have been pro-slavery. We never consider the fact that sympathy with the South might have meant only that you believed in individuals' and States' rights. That was Booth's position.

Yes, Booth loved the Southerners - and the Northerners. He stayed in the North during the war, but that may have been for economic reasons. Booth was one of America's most popular actors, and theaters in the North still did big business during the war. In fact, in 1864, while the average American made a couple of hundred dollars a year if he was lucky, Booth's income was $12,000. Yes, he was rich.

Here's one thing you didn't know about John Wilkes Booth: He was named after his great grandmother's cousin, John Wilkes, who had been the Lord Mayor of London and had led the opposition to King George's prosecuting the American Revolution. That's right: The Booth family in England had publicly, vocally fought the King, believing that the Americans had the right to their freedom.

Booth did detest Lincoln, but only because he believed that Lincoln was destroying the Republic and the Constitution and becoming a dictator. Booth honestly believed that Lincoln was dismantling what our Founding Fathers had put in place.

And right, wrong or indifferent, Lincoln did all those things during the war.

Booth believed not so much in the South as in our individual rights; today we refer to that as having Southern sympathies. And that's why, after he shot Lincoln in Ford's Theater, Booth yelled, "Sic semper tyrannis" - thus ever unto tyrants.

This brings up a question: What should America do if we found out that we had elected a dictator? One who refused to answer to Congress or the Supreme Court? A person who suspended many Americans' right to trial, simply because they disagreed with him? A person who confiscated property without due process, and who exiled American citizens? Tough question.

That was the much of the nation's mindset during the Civil War; it wasn't just Booth who believed that Lincoln had overstepped his presidential bounds. Millions of Northerners thought the same thing. I'm not saying that Lincoln was bad; many of his tough decisions had to be made to save the Union. However, his abuse of power outweighed his many necessary wartime acts. Lincoln believed that he was saving the nation and what it stood for. So did Booth.

In case you were wondering, the South actually won the Civil War, though not at first. Consider this: To this day, the Southern states still stand for States' rights, less government. The more liberal North loves it when the government gets involved in everything. Those exact same circumstances led to the Civil War.

Not guns but the advent of air conditioning turned the tide. Think about it: Which Northern city is growing today, compared with those in the Southern states? Can't think of one, can you? No, once air conditioning made the South tolerable, more and more Americans migrated into Southern cities - and immediately started complaining about the size and scope of our government.

The only good thing to come out of the Civil War was the freeing of the slaves - although, as the North originally won, you would have thought they might have done more to protect those citizens on their release from their former masters.

Still, Lincoln left us with two legacies. He was the most brilliant of Presidents - and he committed the worst crimes against the Constitution. Booth's family had always fought for individual liberty - to the point of standing up to King George - and John Wilkes Booth believed that by assassinating Lincoln he was restoring the Constitution and our individual rights, and ending a dictatorship.

Few people in America today realize just how dark and paranoid a personality Lincoln had. Even fewer Americans realize that Booth came from a long line of ancestors who had fought those in authority to guarantee an individual's rights.

Who was right and who was wrong? Even I won't speculate on that one. But if we could have asked those 13,000 people unjustly imprisoned who they'd call the Great Emancipator, would they have said Lincoln - or Booth?

68. The Oily Silk Road

I have one question for you: If the Arab Islamic world didn't control the huge oil reserves desperately needed by the industrialized West, primarily America, how would the current mindset toward terrorists be different?

Tough question. Here's one that is even tougher: If the Middle Eastern Muslims didn't have or had never had any oil, would terrorists from that region of the world have ever come into existence? After all, if we Americans weren't dependent on Middle Eastern oil to keep our economy going, which creates our personal wealth, would we constantly have the political problems we do with the Muslim communities in that region of the world? Doubtful.

Now, a dose of reality. For the last 1,000 years, in spite of the fact that the Middle East is pretty much a desert, it seems the Muslims have always controlled the essentials needed by Western Christian societies. And 500 years ago, what the Muslims controlled economically led directly to the rediscovery of America and thence to our colonization.

First, when Christianity was just taking off, the Muslims controlled the Holy Lands. Hence the Crusades, to recapture the area, its riches and its faithful. And the Crusades' impact on both religions, even today, should not be underestimated. That series of attacks gave Christians their first team effort, which helped them form their identity. It did much the same thing for Muslim Arabs; it was also the first event that brought them together. These religious identities and the mistrust founded then remain with us to this day.

Hundreds of years later, European Christian society needed something else extremely valuable to its culture: Spices. Pepper, cloves, cinnamon, ginger and nutmeg. Spices, once a luxury only the rich could afford, by the late 1300s had been recognized as helpful in preserving any nation's food supply. As the Little Ice Age had enveloped Europe, newly shorter growing seasons meant that the few foodstuffs available had to be kept without spoiling for longer periods, or entire populations could have starved. So spices became a huge industry for Europe, primarily Italy. And the economic wealth created by spice traders in cities like Venice, Genoa and Pisa helped bring Europe out of the Dark Ages.

And who controlled the world's spice trade, the lifeblood of European society that ensured the safety of its food supplies? That's right, spices came on caravans from Asia - and those caravans went right through the Middle East. And that trade route was controlled by, you guessed it, Arab Muslims.

Just like oil is to us today, spices were the cornerstone of their economy to the Europeans hundreds of years ago, and both times it's been people of the Islamic faith in the Middle East who were the main brokers of those vital goods.

So, how did that situation help in the discovery of America? There is a direct connection; here's how it goes. Italy first controlled most of the spice trade coming into Europe. The Muslims allowed Italian spice traders to travel as

far as Aleppo and Alexandria - no farther - to buy spices from them. Other European nations couldn't stand the fact that the Italians were creating that type of wealth, nor were they happy with the prices Italy had set on spices. Nor did the Christians of the time appreciate the fact that heathen Muslims were calling the shots. Sounds about like today, doesn't it?

Enter Prince Henry, who separated Portugal from Spain and crowned himself King in 1385. Henry, a devout Catholic Mystic, personally decided that it was his duty to wipe out all the Muslim infidels in the world. To that end, he created a navy and set off to destroy the Muslim stronghold of Ceuta in Morocco, which he did in short order.

But, once the city was defeated, imagine Prince Henry's surprise at finding all that gold, silver, tapestries - and warehouse after warehouse full of spices. Realizing how wealthy the spice trade had made the Muslims, Prince Henry of Portugal decided to find a way to circumvent their control of the spice trade. If necessary, he decided, he would circumnavigate the globe to find a way to the Orient that bypassed the Muslim-controlled spice lanes. Oh, and of course, if he could kill a few more heathens along the way, so much the better.

Prince Henry returned to Portugal and founded the world's first maritime academy at Sagres. And for the next 40 years he assembled the world's finest mapmakers, navigators, engineers, carpenters and sail makers, and he trained sea captains and pilots. Prince Henry allowed Italians, Spaniards, Britons and Jews to attend his academy. Surprisingly, he also allowed Arabs, at least those who would tell him how to get around the known spice trade routes.

It was Prince Henry's naval academy that redefined latitude and longitude, invented the quadrant and improved the quality of the world's seagoing ships. In 1454, Pope Nicholas the Fifth endorsed Henry's school by giving Portugal exclusive rights to, "Bring under submission the pagans of the countries not yet inflicted with the plague of Islam and give them knowledge of the name of Christ." Six years later, Prince Henry died and was given the honorific "the Navigator."

Then the Turks took over in Constantinople. When they raised the price of spices through the roof by cutting off most of Europe's supply, no doubt many perceived it as an act so hostile as to incite war. Remembering its history, including the Crusades, and knowing that the Pope had denounced the Islamic Faith as a plague, the Ottoman Empire felt it had every reason to be openly hostile to Christian Europe.

Well, back in Portugal, in 1481, King John the Second ordered sailors from the naval academy to go farther down the coast of Africa, into uncharted waters as it were, to find abundant pepper sources and get around the Muslim embargo of spices.

In 1487, Bartolomeu Dias De Novaes was on just such a trip down the African coast when a huge Atlantic storm blew him around the tip of Africa. By accident, the spice lanes controlled by the Muslims had been broken. Now there was a clear water route to Asia. And just as Novaes returned to Portugal with the news, into that city came ... Christopher Columbus, who immediately announced that if Novaes had found a way to Asia by going east, then he would find a way to get to Asia by going west.

The Portuguese thought Columbus insane. They knew he was severely underestimating the distance he'd have to go west to reach Asia. The Spanish didn't: Three years later, Columbus set foot in the New World.

Today, most of us know that Columbus made it here because he was looking for a way to find Asia by sailing west. No one is taught, however, why all this came about, which is because the Muslims of the Middle East controlled the spice trade. Moreover, a short lesson from history is missing: For hundreds of years, Muslims and Europeans shared in the profits of the spice trade.

It was the spice trade that gave the Muslims their incredible wealth, encouraging their period of enlightenment. Spices also contributed greatly to the European economy, and they saved lives in that region by preserving food during the Little Ice Age. Spices were to the European economy what oil is to us today.
It was in reaction to the Christians' open contempt for the Islamic faith that the Turks cut off their spice supplies almost entirely. This is the exact same situation we could face today in the Middle East with oil. However, unlike today, during the open trade between Europe and Islamic countries at the end of the Dark Ages, the Muslims set up higher centers of learning, in Baghdad and at the University of Toledo in Spain. At both centers Christian, Jewish and Muslim scholars worked side by side in their quest for knowledge.

What absolutely no one is taught is that Christopher Columbus' trip was a direct result of the Muslim control of the spice trade. Had that fight between Europe and the Middle East not happened 500 years ago, you might not be enjoying your life in America today: It directly resulted from Christian businessmen's secret attempt to cut the Muslim spice traders out of their livelihood.
Oil from Russia, anyone?

69. Feel Safer Yet?

Now that it's a declared time of war, and many new laws seem to have the intent of stripping away certain civil liberties, we might well be reminded of a period in our history where the exact same thing happened. That, of course, was the Second World War: Your right to privacy didn't exist when our 70-ish fathers were young servicemen; and, like today, no one seemed to care. After all, it was war.
However, there's a part of this story that you didn't know: Fully two years before Pearl Harbor, America was already engaged in spying on its own citizens.

It started in 1939 with the Office of Censorship. At first it wasn't much of an office - a borrowed room and just two employees. Within a very short time, the Office of Censorship covered 90 buildings across the United States, Canada and Great Britain, staffed by 15,000 full-time employees.

If you mailed a letter, talked on the phone or sent a telegram, it was more than likely that somewhere along the line, someone working for the Office of Censorship would be part of your conversation.
As the public wasn't aware of this vast spy network, it was important that the group's dealings be discreet. Airmail letters couldn't be held up more than 24 hours, regular mail not longer than two days. And considering that the Office of Censorship was handling over a million letters a day, the workload was incredible.

Now, I don't want to suggest that each and every letter was opened and read; that couldn't have been done. No, Washington only opened and read letters from or to certain individuals on a watch list, on which Charles Lindbergh was just one of 100,000 names. Also, all letters going overseas were opened and read.
Telegrams were different; the Censorship Office suspected many telegrams of containing coded messages. When one sailor wired his girlfriend that he was bringing home a box of chocolates, the censors changed it to read a box of candy, just in case there had been a secret message encoded. Another case: A man sent a telegram that read, "Father is dead." They changed it to "Father is deceased." When the recipient wired back, is father dead or deceased?, he gave us an arrest for spying.

However, our greatest success in spying on Americans came when one of Censorship's agents in Hamilton, Bermuda, opened a seemingly innocent letter destined for Lisbon, Portugal. The censor noticed that the address was a drop-off mailbox for Nazi agents. So, he put the letter to the heat test, and this message appeared: "Eleven ships leaving for Russia Feb. 12. including steamer with airplane motors and 28 long-range guns. One has deck-loaded airplanes, parts and small munitions."

The letter was postmarked New York and signed Fred Sloan. We had a spy on the waterfront. Other letters marked Sloan were read, and the only clue to his identity was a brief reference to being an air raid warden. But that clue didn't help; there were 98,000 air raid wardens in New York City. Then came the 13th letter from Sloan to Lisbon. In April of 1943, he let slip the best clue so far to his identity, writing that he'd had a wonderful time on the beach at Estoril.

One FBI man knew exactly what Sloan was writing about. Estoril, a popular resort just outside of Lisbon, was a hotbed of Nazi spy activity. Armed with Sloan's last few letters, the FBI descended on the Customs office in New York; there agents slogged through the thousands and thousands of baggage declarations of everyone who had returned from Portugal since 1941. Keep in mind that travel between the US and Portugal was allowed during the war; the FBI agents had their work cut out, trying to match Sloan's signature to names on baggage declarations. It took two months, but on June 9th, 1943, one FBI man, looking through a magnifying glass at his 5,193rd declaration, found the signature that matched Sloan's.

The FBI had their man. They tailed him for two weeks, from his home on Staten Island to the bar where he worked. The feds, dressed in sailors' uniforms and acting drunk, gave false answers to his questions

about ship movements. Impersonating meter men, insurance agents and air raid wardens, they built their case; and finally, in late June, they arrested the man who falsely called himself Fred Sloan.

In late June of 1943, he was arrested. Though at first he denied everything, eventually he broke down and signed a confession. Tried in September of 1943, he was given a 30-year sentence for espionage.
His neighbors were stunned. They described the man, whose real name was Ernest Lehmitz, as a good ol' boy, the first neighbor to come over and help out if you had a problem. Further, he'd been a super patriot. Ernest had the largest victory garden, yelled at neighbors who kept their lights on during air raid warnings. Always volunteered for civil defense duties. How could he be a Nazi spy?

He had a nagging wife, wore bad clothes, didn't throw money around, and never missed a day of work. And it turns out he traveled to Germany in 1939, joined the Axis powers, and sold out America for a mere $50 a week. Fifty bucks a week.

There's a few points about this story that need wrapping up. First, back in the primitive days of intelligence, Ernest Lehmitz, a.k.a. Fred Sloan, was caught within months. Today the FBI is having a hard time finding out who sent anthrax through the mail, even though it leaves a trail back to the source.
Second, the Office of Censorship, which we claimed we only needed for the war, never went away. Today its duties are handled by the National Security Agency, and yes, they still listen to our overseas phone calls. But during the war, the Office of Censorship looked at over a billion letters and a couple of billion telegrams, and their biggest catch was Ernest Lehmitz.

Third, no one knows how many ships were lost because of his activities. For that loss of life Lehmitz was given 30 years — not much, really.

Maybe this story gives us some hope that one day we'll catch the person who sent all that anthrax through the mail. Let's just hope that if they catch the guy, he gets prison time equivalent to the crime's effects on our government. Other than that, watch what you say on the phone.

70. Just Don't Burn It

Our nation's official banner: Old Glory, the Stars and Stripes. It's certainly a line in the sand between those who believe in this country, no matter what, and those who would desecrate a nation's symbol in order to make public their personal political statements.

As you may well "know", it was Betsy Ross who designed and hand-stitched our national flag. It was the Stars and Stripes that the guy beside the drummer proudly carried into the Revolutionary War. It was Old Glory, still flying above Fort McHenry after a battle-torn night, that inspired Francis Scott Key to write The Star Spangled Banner, and it was the Stars and Stripes that Custer carried across the Great Plains to his death. What you should know is that each of those so-called "historical facts" is absolutely wrong.
Moreover, from historical research, it seems that our worship of the American flag as we practice it today has more to do with a widespread racist movement in the late 1800s than with anything else.

First, let's discuss the myth of Betsy Ross. She was a real person, but we shouldn't teach anyone that she created our flag - she had absolutely nothing to do with it. Her grandson made that story up to enhance his family's social standing. Yes, it was another case of someone's changing the facts to make himself look good, in the belief that no one would check up on his story. Which, in fact, no one did. In case you're wondering, Congress officially credited Francis Hopkinson for creating our national flag.

Our first national flag, commissioned for our navy, was basically the British flag with white stripes dividing it. Our second national flag, the Stars and Stripes, changed the St. George's cross in the field to stars. However, you should know that neither Congress nor our founding fathers gave much thought to symbolism or to how our flag should look. They created a national flag for only one reason: to identify our ships at sea and in foreign ports.

And no one in the Continental Army went into battle behind the flag. It's true: Try to find one painting from that period where anyone is carrying our flag into battle. It doesn't exist. However, you do remember Archibald Willard's painting called The Spirit of '76, showing the drummers and pipers escorting the flag through that war, right? It was painted more than a century later, in 1891: Paintings from the Revolutionary War period show no flags flying, simply because the flag wasn't flown.

Few people even knew what our flag looked like. A letter to the King of Naples, written a year after the flag's adoption by Benjamin Franklin and John Adams, depicted our flag as having 13 stripes - alternately red, white and blue.

Still, after we separated from England, you'd think our flag would have been more cherished. Again, not true. In 1794 Congress debated adding two more stars, to symbolize Vermont's and Kentucky's joining the union. And Congressmen objected to the discussion, on the grounds that it was a trivial detail. One Congressman went on record as calling it "a trifling business, which ought not to engross the attention of the House," when it was their "duty to discuss matters of infinitely greater importance." That motion was seconded by the representative from Vermont - and one proposed new star was for his state. In the end, the flag did get two more stars, but only to end the debate quickly.

There was so little respect for our flag that originally no standards existed for making one. Some stars were white, others silver; some stars had five points, others six. Even the number of its stripes confused everyone: The flag that once flew over our Capitol had 18 stripes, while the one flying at the New York naval yard at the same time had only nine. Some put the stars in a row; others put them in a circle.

We didn't go into battle behind the flag until the Mexican American War. And the Marines didn't use the flag until 1876, the Cavalry until 1887. And no, Custard never carried a flag into battle, except in the Hollywood versions.

But, you ask, what about Francis Scott Key and the writing of The Star Spangled Banner during the War of 1812? The song supposedly celebrated the 30-foot-by-42-foot flag that today hangs in the Smithsonian. Well, glad you asked. Key hated the War of 1812. We know because his letters survive to this day. To his mother he wrote that the war was America's fault, and we deserved to lose it. To a friend, he wrote that the War of 1812 was "an abominable war, and a lump of wickedness."

Moreover, Key wrote the song standing eight miles away from Fort McHenry, in Baltimore's harbor; it's doubtful he could even see a flag flying that far away. And, while Key wrote the words to The Star Spangled Banner, most Americans already knew the tune. It was an old British drinking song, and it celebrated only wine and love.

Yes, that flag was flying at dawn over Fort McHenry the morning after the British bombardment. But there couldn't have been any "proof through the night that our flag was still there" - our forces took it down the night of the battle. They raised it again in the morning - after the British ships had left. Hard to sing even for excellent voices, it was not a popular song at the time. It only became our national anthem in 1931, during the Great Depression.

Another thing: We didn't always put our hand over our hearts while pledging allegiance to the flag. Until Hitler came to power, we extended our right arms, like a "Heil Hitler" salute, when saying the Pledge of Allegiance. Once the Nazis made the forward-arm salute their symbol, Congress amended the law to force schoolchildren's hands over their left breasts.

And by the way, our schools didn't have flags, inside or outside, until 1890. Flag Day wasn't declared until 1916, and Congress had no rules governing the treatment of our flag until 1942. So, the worship of the American flag is actually a fairly recent development. The flag was nothing important until the period of 1885 to 1890 and thereafter.

So, you want to know what changed our attitudes about our national flag? In a word, racism.

The second largest wave of immigrants to America, in the late 1800s, was no longer composed mainly of the tired, hungry and wretched refuse of English-speaking peoples. No, this time around they spoke the native tongues of Hungary, Romania, Germany, Italy, China and Japan. At the same time, labor strife came into being. Moreover, we saw a connection; we believed that these newcomers, whom we couldn't understand, were behind a sinister movement to undermine and take away our jobs and destroy our industry. We worried about Socialism, Communism, and other societal diseases carried by people who spoke gibberish so we couldn't know what they were saying.

Like all good Americans, we rallied behind a symbol of who we were as a nation: We were English-speaking Americans, and we had a flag - a symbol of everything our ancestors had fought for when they'd created this country. That's why we started putting flags into schools and on buildings everywhere, to remind the newcomers that we were Americans, they were the outsiders. In schools, we started saying the pledge to demand loyalty of these immigrants' children.

Therefore, the worship of the flag was two pronged. At first it was a reaction to fear about massive immigration. And then we tried using the flag as a loyalty test for both the immigrants and their children.

There is absolutely nothing wrong with our strong beliefs about America's flag and what it's come to represent for each of us. A lot has happened in this past century, both good and bad, behind the banner of the Stars and Stripes. Today, for most of us, it certainly symbolizes more than it did a year ago.

But don't believe - and don't tell your kids - that Betsy Ross created our flag, or that it flew through the night, or that we even gave it much thought in its first 120 years. None of that's true. We embraced our flag only because so many immigrants came to America that we couldn't understand, and we feared what they represented - an emotion, I should point out, that many of us still feel today.

71. The Pilgrim Myth, Why It Smells

Somehow or another we never quite seem to get our history right. Not that we don't have a lot of history, but it does seem that we leave out the most important parts; too often, we fail to relate what truly took place.

A good case in point is the first successful settlement in America. Most people listening, or their kids, will point to the Pilgrims and Plymouth Rock as the start of our country's modern civilization. And proof positive of our future and upcoming democracy, you'll say, can be found in the Mayflower Compact, signed by those same Pilgrims in 1620.

Now, we also know that Jamestown, Virginia, was already established by the time the Pilgrims got here. But for some reason, that particular community doesn't get a lot of play in our history books, or that settlement isn't considered as significant. As proof of that, name the ship the Pilgrims came over on. Of course you know it's the Mayflower. Well, that's not totally correct, but more on that in a moment.

Now, can you name the three ships that bought the British colonists to Jamestown? Tough, isn't it? Well, just in case you make it on Who Wants to Be a Millionaire one day, and Regis asks you that question, it's the Susan Constant, the Goodspeed, and the Discovery.

In either case, it was neither the Pilgrims nor the British at Jamestown who first settled this country.

Accurately stated, it would be the Indians who got here somewhere around 30,000 years ago. And we never talk about the Spanish, who were here in this country over a hundred years before the Pilgrims. Of course, you're thinking, what did the Spanish leave as a legacy to our society? Just a few things. The Spanish gave us horses, cattle, pigs, sheep, and all the stuff we worship in the cowboy ideal.

They gave us the cowboy language, with words such as bronco, lariat, and rodeo. Let's see, rodeos, horses, hamburgers, and bacon, that's the Spanish influence on America. Now, what did the Pilgrims bring us besides themselves? Thanksgiving? Not really.

It should also be pointed out that Spanish Jews were the first European settlers of New Mexico. And that took place about thirty years before the Jamestown colony, not to mention the founding of Plymouth Rock.

In fact, 94 years before Plymouth Rock, the Spanish abandoned a settlement in South Carolina, leaving their slaves here. So those slaves really could be called the original settlers on the East Coast by any definition. I should also point out that the Dutch had already settled what's now Albany, New York, six years before the Pilgrims landed.

You probably didn't realize how many people were here before the Pilgrims, did you?
But the point of this story is about the Pilgrims and Plymouth Rock and most of the nonsense about them we still cherish today. Like the "fact" that they originally sailed from Plymouth, England: That's just not true.

First, the Pilgrims came originally from Scrooby, England, where they had separated from the Church of England and formed their own religion. The Pilgrim religion rejected Christmas, Easter, and All Saint's Day — or most of the holidays we hold sacred today.

Of course, none of their religious beliefs were taken too well by the powers that ruled England. Needless to say, they had to go. But, they didn't originally come to America. Instead in 1609 they sailed to Amsterdam, a country more tolerant of different religions.

But again, they encountered a problem. Foreigners in Amsterdam were hired only as poorly paid laborers. So the Pilgrims had their religious freedom, but very little money. As no one likes to be broke, there was a Church debate as to where they should go next.

England wouldn't let them back in, and the Dutch did offer transportation to their colonies in America. The Pilgrims also debated Guiana in South America, but finally agreed on Jamestown; after all, in Virginia there were British separatists and a common language.

So, they bought a boat for the trip. It was — the Speedwell. Didn't see that coming did you? And from Amsterdam they traveled to England for supplies and then off to Jamestown.

Now, in Southampton, the 35 Pilgrims met up with another British and European group of 67 individuals headed for the New World. It was their boat, the Mayflower, whose name you remember. The captains of the Speedwell and the Mayflower decided to travel the Atlantic together, with a final destination of Jamestown. And, make no mistake about it, the two groups set sail from Southampton, not Plymouth.

Another crisis arose at sea: The Speedwell leaked, and leaked badly. The two boats turned back to England for repairs. And they left again. And again, the Speedwell leaked, and both boats were forced to return to England a second time. This time the Pilgrims talked their traveling companions into letting them share passage on the Mayflower. Plymouth, England, is best remembered accurately as the place where the Pilgrims dumped their boat, the Speedwell, not as the place they left for the New World.

And now, finally, off to Jamestown. However, the more the Pilgrims thought about it on the trip, the more they realized they didn't want to hang out with the British in Virginia, who might again reject them for their religious beliefs. So, somewhere along the way, they held a little mutiny and demanded a new place to settle. Keep in mind that there were only 35 Pilgrims on board, so the other 67 individuals couldn't have been happy with that decision. So, how did the Pilgrims win the others over to their side? The Mayflower Compact. That's right, the document stating one for all and all for one, with civilian rule of law. While that didn't fully placate the British on board, the French and Irish on the trip kind of liked it.

Finally, they landed somewhere around Plymouth Rock. More accurately, they landed at the deserted Indian village of Patuxet. (Pa-tux-et) This was a good thing: They landed in December, in the middle of a New England winter, and found empty huts already in place to protect them against the cold.

That's right, the Pilgrims and their traveling companions didn't build homes that year, nor did they plant fields of corn. The cornfields were already there, left by the Wampanoag (wam-pa-no-ag) tribe.

They found only one Indian there, Squanto. An Indian who, surprisingly, spoke near perfect English, Squanto would ultimately help save the colony. However, here's the sad part of that tale. Just three years earlier, the village of Patuxet had been a thriving community, long accustomed to dealing with the English.
British fishermen, long before the Pilgrims landed, had been fishing for cod off the Massachusetts coast.
Apparently, during one visit in 1617, quite by accident, the fishermen transmitted a plague to the Wampanoags

— a European disease to which they had no immunity.
It devastated the tribe, killing upwards of 95% of them. In fact, when the Pilgrims landed, they didn't enter a completely deserted Indian village; many of the fallen Indians' bodies littered the countryside. Not knowing in that day about bacterial infections, the Pilgrims assumed God had cleared the land of its native inhabitants just for them.
Squanto had arrived just before the Pilgrims, which was why he had survived the plague. Turns out that in 1605, when he was a small boy, Squanto had been kidnapped by a British sailing captain and taken to England to become the personal servant of Ferdinando Gorges. For nine years that was his life, but in 1614 a British slave raider kidnapped him a second time and sold him into slavery in Spain.
Squanto escaped, made his way back to England, and in 1619 talked Captain Thomas Dermer into letting him sail with him to find his way back home. When finally he got back to his village of Patuxet, everyone in it had died from the plague.
Then came the Pilgrims. Squanto taught them how to raise corn and squash and to fish the local rivers. Another thing Squanto tried to get the Pilgrims to do was take baths — like the Indians did. At the time, Europeans believed that bathing was unhealthy, and frankly, the Indians didn't appreciate their European musk. However, in this endeavor, Squanto was quite unsuccessful.
In time, other Indians joined the new colony. Survivors of the plagues that had spread throughout New England, they hoped to find safety in numbers with the new settlers.

A year later, in 1621, the Pilgrims and their group, along with the Indians, sat down to their first Thanksgiving. History books now tell us that the Indians had never, ever seen such a feast. Wrong again. As they ate primarily pumpkins, corn, squash, and turkey, it was actually the Pilgrims who had never seen such a feast. All those items are indigenous to America — not to England or Amsterdam.
Also, absolutely nothing historic or even new about this get-together. A thanksgiving festival, Lughnasadh, was ancient tradition in Britain; though the Pilgrims' religion forbade such pagan worship, the idea of an autumn harvest feast wasn't at all out of order. Additionally, most Indian tribes in New England celebrated the fall harvest. So both the British and the Indian tribes had given thanks at leaf-fall before the Pilgrims landed here. Yet while we mistakenly give them credit for inventing the practice, we're forgetting also that the Pilgrims were the minority when the Mayflower landed on American shores.
As a matter of fact, Abraham Lincoln proclaimed the first national holiday of Thanksgiving in 1863, in the Civil War's darkest hours, as a morale booster. But Americans didn't consider the Pilgrims' history part of that celebration until someone wrote them into our national Thanksgiving play a generation later, in the 1890s.
And a generation after that, it was Franklin Roosevelt who moved the official observation of Thanksgiving to its current date. He did it during the Great Depression, believing it would help retailers sell more goods between Thanksgiving and Christmas.
So much for Tradition.
Let's recap. The Pilgrims didn't come to America from England, but from Amsterdam, stopping in Southampton on the way. They didn't leave from Plymouth, England, in any case; that's where they left their worthless boat, the Speedwell.
It was a rebellion over the Mayflower's destination, between the Pilgrim minority and the other travelers, that led to their agreeing to share power by signing the Mayflower Compact.
They survived in America because they found an abandoned Indian village, its inhabitants killed by a European plague. And they survived with the help of the Indian Squanto, a former slave who knew English.

Now, how is it that we remember the Pilgrims and Plymouth Rock more than we do the British colony that existed when they got here — Jamestown Virginia? Because Jamestown isn't a pretty story, that's why. You see, that group's members, who were mostly an incredibly lazy lot, fought amongst each other constantly. Instead of getting crops growing and commerce up and running, they foolishly hunted for gold for which Virginia isn't exactly noted. When winter came and they had no food, they often turned to cannibalizing the recent dead. Some became servants to local Indian tribes in return for food.

That's hardly what we want remembered in our history books about the individuals we think started our Great Society.

No, instead of focusing on Jamestown's sinners we invest our history in a group of religious zealots, the Pilgrims. And we focus on their sintliness rather than on the known facts: They rebelled on an ocean voyage on which they were guests, moved into an abandoned Indian village, and didn't create the one thing we give them credit for, Thanksgiving.

As for me, I think the Spanish — who gave us horses, cattle, pigs, barbecue and rodeos — contributed more to American society. At least down here in Texas.

72. Maybe They Weren't So Perfect

You've just got to love the history of America, even though for most of us it's a dual-sided sword. On the one hand we make our history so mythic that it inspires us to be proud as a nation. On the other hand, because that history is so mythic, that we feel that as a nation in modern times we never live up to the standards of those great Americans who came before us.

What's a country to do?

The year was 1923, and someone who knew more about history than the public at large published the true story of Paul Revere. In a way every bit as important an event as it's incorrectly depicted in our history books, its only difference from what we're taught was that Revere never made that ride.

It's not that Revere didn't try to warn his countrymen that the British were coming, it's just that the British arrested him shortly after he started his ride. In fact, what we'd been teaching all of our school children for 80 years was the history of Paul Revere and his famous ride was based solely on the poem by Washington Irving.

Now at the time, this revelation about Revere's never having made that famous journey fairly caused a donnybrook in this country. Apparently most Americans couldn't or didn't want to accept the fact that the story of Paul Revere was mostly fiction. It came down to President Warren Harding to set the record straight, and he told the press, "Only a few days ago an iconoclastic American said there never was a ride by Paul Revere; that he started out with Colonel Dawes, an ancestor of the recent Director of the Budget, to give the warning, but was arrested. Suppose he did not ride; it was still the beginning of the independence of the new Republic in America. So, I love the story of Paul Revere, whether he rode or not."

A couple of minor points. As we stated, Revere tried to ride, but was arrested. The man branded an "iconoclast" was simply a historian setting the record straight. And finally, that's how history is written and taught in America: Don't let the facts get in the way of a good yarn.

And by the way, that recent Director of the Budget whose ancestor, Colonel Dawes, did make the ride warning everyone? He was Charles Gates Dawes, who would become vice president two years later. But you probably remember him better as the man who wrote It's All in the Game, a No. 1 hit for Tommy Edwards in the fifties.

Our Founding Fathers seem now to have been incredibly good, so perfect in their virtue and strong in their belief in mankind that no politician today could possibly hold a candle to them. In fact, however, in their capabilities our politicians today are closer to our Founding Fathers than one might think.

As we know today, Thomas Jefferson probably fooled around with one of his slaves. And for the first 120 or so years after his presidency, he wasn't worshipped at all in this country. In the 1920s a gentleman tried to raise funds to restore Monticello, and he told the press he could hardly count on getting the money up for

the down payment, much less the restoration. No, Thomas Jefferson only gained his importance in history once Franklin Roosevelt had come into power, when the Democratic Party put on a PR campaign elevating Jefferson to his current heroic status.

You see, the Democrats during the Great Depression badly needed the public to believe that only Democrats could save America. So Jefferson only became one of our most respected Founding Fathers, only took his current place among our most esteemed presidents, a mere 70 years ago, simply to get the public to buy into Roosevelt's New Deal.

Benjamin Franklin was as promiscuous as Bill Clinton. John Adams was by anybody's admission an arrogant ass.

No one thought George Washington was brilliant, though he was noted for being a fair man. So, how did Washington become this modern American god? Like Jefferson, Washington wasn't thought of that way before the Great Depression. The government felt that Washington's image needed a makeover, so a PR campaign was started in 1932, sponsored by Congress.

Sol Bloom a representative from New York and one of the organizers of the bicentennial of Washington's birth, couldn't figure out why people didn't think more highly of our first elected president. So he got Congress to publish a series of oversized, beautiful glossy books telling the story of, as they put it "the real George Washington."

Suddenly, Washington was no longer merely our first president. These new, Congressionally funded books taught us that he was also a businessman, engineer, city builder, family man, religious leader, farmer and inventor. Man, what a resume!

And, while Washington did many, many things in his life, as often as not his ventures weren't successful. In fact, his whole net worth came about because he married well. And Martha Washington was rich because her first husband died and left her well off.

Of course what we all love about the men who formed this nation is their deep-seated belief that all men are created equal, showing their enduring faith in all of us. Right? The problem with that is, our Founding Fathers had no faith at all in mankind. Harvard professor Bernard Bailyn best expressed the premise for our Constitution; it was based, he said, "on the belief that all men are ... ambitious and vindictive."

And that, my friends, is why they created our governmental system of checks and balances. So that no one political group or individual could gain power over another. That doesn't show faith in mankind, that shows a total lack of faith in human nature. That's how the Founding Fathers felt about absolute power: That anyone who might even think he had it would become absolutely corrupt.

One other thing we know for sure is that our Founding Fathers loved the common man; and that's why there's all that wonderful stuff in the Constitution and Bill of Rights. In fact, the exact opposite is the truth: They didn't trust anyone, including the common man.

Doubt that statement? Here's what Samuel Adams said about his fellow countrymen: "There is a depravity of mankind. Ambition and the lust of power are the predominant passions in the breasts of most men."

Then again, the idea that we are a true democracy only started when Woodrow Wilson came up with that campaign in the First World War. If he could convince us that we all had a say in government, he hoped, maybe a galvanized nation would support his constant interference in other countries' problems in our hemisphere. It worked.

Let's go back to the start of this country and really look closely at the "all men are created equal" and "we should all have a say in our government" stuff. Because our Founding Fathers said one thing, but they did quite another.

While Wilson's democratic statements sounded ideal, in reality we weren't a democracy; we were a repub-

lic, electing representatives to put our views across and protect our interests. The only problem was, very few people could vote for the individuals that were supposed to represent us all.

In 1787, out of 4 million Americans only 160,000 voted in the elections for the state ratifying conventions. Fully 75% of all Americans didn't vote. Not that they wouldn't have liked to, especially after that "all men are created equal" stuff. Unlike today's apathetic voter who won't vote, however, 75% of our countrymen in 1787 didn't vote because they couldn't: They didn't meet the property requirements. That's right, our Founding Fathers wanted only the elite and well to do - and thus, possibly, only educated, well informed and worldly men - to have a say in our government.

Knowing that not everyone had access to government casts an aura of more than a little self-preservation on all of this. Alexander Hamilton wrote about something that all of us hate today. Taxes. Hamilton was the first believer in high tax rates for business and landowners. Why? Hamilton wrote that public debt is a blessing, because the more the government owes the people, the more they want to see it survive: They're invested in it.

Historians debate every day what our Founding Fathers really meant to put in place for all of us. One side believes they were the best of the best, selfless individuals trying to start a new country and give power to the people. Others see them as egotistical and arrogant men, vying for power themselves.

What people forget is that history may change, but human nature doesn't. Our Founding Fathers knew the ability of power to corrupt completely, and that many people everywhere are foolish and greedy and shortsighted - and they shouldn't be able to vote and control others' destiny. Two statements that we all believe today, although you might not say it out loud.

As for rewriting our history to enhance the reality of the past or alter it completely? Well, today we all know that Paul Revere didn't make that ride - the "one if by land and two if by sea" myth - but myself, I still like the story of Paul Revere, whether he rode or not. I just happen to know that it's not historically accurate.

73. Ike Cheated

Lately we've heard many discussions concerning what to do about unsportsmanlike conduct in professional sports. Oh sure, some can't blame anyone with the Texas Rangers if they throw a chair at a spectator, or if the starting squad of the Detroit Pistons decide to take their anger out on the first five rows of former basketball fans, who happen to be paying customers that night. And maybe it started with that father-and-son act that ran onto a baseball field a couple of years ago and attacked ballplayers. One thing is for sure: Sports is becoming infinitely more exciting for the price of admission.
Then again, there were always problems with professional athletes.

One great example of a great old-time ballplayer gone bad was Len Koenecke, a Minor League ball player. He was so good that, in 1931, John McGraw of the Giants paid $75,000 for his contract and said he would be a bright star in the National League. Koenecke played just one season for the Giants before being traded to Brooklyn, under Casey Stengel, in 1934. That year Koenecke hit 14 home runs, had a .327 batting average, committed only two errors and led the National League with a .994 fielding percentage.

But Len Koenecke also developed a drinking problem; so, in September of the 1935 season, Casey Stengel cut him loose on the road. Len got liquored up and boarded an American Airlines flight to Detroit, but they threw him off for being drunk. So Len then got on a chartered flight, got into a fight with another passenger and tried to grab the flight controls from the pilot. That started another fight, which ended when the pilot grabbed the onboard fire extinguisher and hit Koenecke over the head with it, killing him instantly.

Nevertheless, even with all the violence, out-of-control players and other issues, many sports still exist today simply because of many of our former presidents. Many of those presidents happened to love the games and were exceptional sportsmen themselves.

Sure, Thomas Jefferson once wrote, "Games played with the ball are too violent for the body and stamp no character on the mind." But then again, Jefferson was too busy, writing minor things like the foundations of our Republic, to go out and have a little fun.

By the time Gerald Ford came into the White House, few remembered that as a college student he'd not only made a few bucks as a professional male model, but Ford had also turned down contract offers from both the Green Bay Packers and the Detroit Lions. He had been voted the most valuable player on his Michigan college team in 1934, but he accepted a job as the assistant boxing coach and varsity football coach at Yale, where he would also study law.

John Quincy Adams was a competitive swimmer who won many races in his youth. After he became president of the United States, Adams regularly went swimming in the Potomac, even when the river was in flood. Abraham Lincoln, gangly as he was, turned out to be a world-class wrestler; as young men, he and his friends would bait others into betting that their friends could easily best the future president. Lincoln usually won, and quickly. Even his closest friends said he was hard as nails; Lincoln also did well in running, jumping and crowbar heaving. However, none of those was his best sport; records show that Abraham Lincoln was one of the best Game of Five players in Illinois - you know that game better today as handball.

Woodrow Wilson had always wanted to be a baseball player, but his lousy eyesight kept that dream from becoming a reality. When he attended Princeton, he tried out for the baseball team but didn't make the cut. In time, Wilson was hired as Princeton's football coach - where his intellect, not his eyesight, made him one of the nation's premier football coaches for all time. In fact, the game of football as you know it today, guess what? It's based on Coach Woodrow Wilson's tenure at Princeton. Before Wilson's coaching years, football was simply a test of brute strength: Line everyone up on both sides and see which clobbers the other the hardest. Hardly sporting for an Ivy League school. Wilson, realizing his boys were at a competitive disadvantage, was the first to draw up intricate plays that featured reverses, fakes, particular blocking angles and so on. Yes, it was Princeton's team under Woodrow Wilson that first emphasized quickness and skill over size and strength.

It should also be noted that Wilson never once gave his players a "Win one for the Gipper" speech. Instead, his pre-game lectures were always on the subject of honor, fairness, teamwork and good sportsmanship.

In 1911, a kid who called himself Wilson was playing Minor League ball in Junction City, Kansas, to make a few bucks before entering college. Wilson wasn't his real name; he'd had to take an assumed name to keep his amateur standing, because he wanted badly to make the football team at his chosen college. There was a problem: Wilson was so good at playing baseball that all the sportswriters covering the Kansas League started writing about him. So, realizing that his assumed name could potentially derail any hope his real persona had of playing football in college, Wilson quit the baseball team and quickly left town.

Wilson had made the right move, or at least it seemed so at first; for the very next year he made the football team at West Point. He ended up playing in the November 9, 1912, game against the extremely powerful Carlisle School, featuring the legendary Jim Thorpe. In one of his life's proudest moments, Wilson managed to tackle Thorpe. But in doing so he broke his leg and had to be carried off the field; and his football career came to an end that day.

Wilson's real name was Dwight Eisenhower. Ironically, Ike managed to hide his identity playing Minor League ball for money in Kansas; the man he tackled, Jim Thorpe, would lose his Olympic medals because he was caught being paid as a Minor League player.

Richard Nixon was an obsessive-compulsive bowler. In fact, when he was first elected president, he had the indoor swimming pool at the White house covered and a bowling lane installed. There, late into the night, wearing a shirt and tie, Nixon would bowl away, forcing his Secret Service agents to keep score. His average game? 152.

Nixon also loved football. A Washington Redskins fan, he even wrote out plays, which he would send over to George Allen, the Redskins' coach.

This story started out to discuss truly bad sportsmanship and foolish violence during games over the last two years. Getting back to it, we turn again to three of our previous presidents and how each one affected our love of sports.

One such story had started with the Army-Navy football game in 1894. Now, to be fair, up to that point, the annual clash of the two military academies was nothing sort of a legitimized war between the goal posts. For whatever reason, this game was even more bloody and violent than most: Both teams and a great many of the cadets in the stands simply made it a free-for-all over some undisclosed play. Before it was over, a retired General had slapped an Admiral; both demanded the satisfaction of a duel - in which, perhaps because of their advanced age, they both shot and missed. Point is, battle that day was so viciously fought that action had to be taken. Today, our military history claims that the schools suspended the Army-Navy game because they were worried about discipline, but that's not even close to the truth. President Grover Cleveland, hearing about the melee, issued an Executive Order canceling the Army-Navy football game for all time.

Six years later, President William McKinley - fresh from starting America's first international war with Spain, and inspired by our new sense of patriotism - believed the annual football game between the two military schools would generate lots of positives for our young and future officers. He called the heads of both schools into his office and told them point-blank, we're not going to have any more repeats of the 1894 brawl. Having said that, McKinley put together the 1899 Army-Navy football game, an annual rivalry that today is still one of the nation's classics. All because of the Spanish-American War.

There was still a problem with football, whether the fans behaved or not: Too many of our kids were being killed each year playing the game. In fact, in 1905, at least 32 college players lost their lives on the gridiron. The national press turned against the game of football; in sermons each Sunday pastors preached that their parishioners should stop the carnage, lest more college kids die for nothing. Many college presidents issued rules preventing kids from playing the game, and 30 states introduced legislation to ban the sport forever.

Yeah, but Teddy Roosevelt kind of liked the game; he certainly didn't want to see it disappear from the landscape. So Roosevelt brought together a large group of college officials and suggested that instead of banning football, new rules should be put in place to make it a safer sport. From that meeting came the NCAA, which saved football and which still governs college sports today.

Then again, Roosevelt knew something about rough sports. While president, he often invited some of the best boxers of the day to come to the White House and spar with him. One fight got out of hand: Roosevelt was hit so hard by his sparring partner that he was blinded in one eye.

So today, when one sees the foolishness and the violence at professional sporting events, it's nothing like it used to be. Thanks to our sports-loving presidents, our favorite sports still exist, in spite of bans and proposals to outlaw them completely.

By the way, do you know which of our former presidents still holds one high-school track record to this day?

That would be Franklin Delano Roosevelt, who once set the national high-school record for the standing high jump. That event was later eliminated from field and track, so FDR's record stands. No word on how he felt about the violence of football.

75. Santa Claus is Coming to Town

As proud as we are of the Great State of Texas, we tend to gloss over at least part of our rough-and-tumble past. The reality is that Texas came into its own with the discovery of the Spindletop Oil Fields in 1901. And, over the next couple of decades, oil was found most everywhere in the state. It led to great wealth for many Texans and to a crime wave that just wouldn't quit.

Named after John Jay Cisco, the New York banker who financed many of the railroads in our state, the city of Cisco, Texas, lies about 100 west of Fort Worth. Cisco was born when the Central Texas Railway crossing, going north and south over the east- and west-running Texas & Pacific tracks, was completed around 1881. Towns at railroad junctions attracted big business back then.

Things got even better after oil was discovered outside of Ranger in 1917. Fact is that Cisco, on the west end of that oil field, was becoming so wealthy from the oil money and the rail business that Conrad Hilton moved to town in 1919, looking to buy a local bank. That deal fell through, but Hilton had another idea; he hadn't been able to find a decent hotel room in town, so he went into the hotel business instead.

Even today, the Cisco Chamber of Commerce and their museum are funded by large grants from the Hilton Foundation. A thank-you for getting Conrad Hilton started in business.

But, as I said, Texas was still one rough state in those days. Bank robberies were so common - about three or four a day across the state - that the Texas Bankers Association decided that law enforcement agencies weren't doing enough to keep their depositors' money safe. So they offered a $5,000 bounty to anyone who killed a bank robber during the crime. No questions asked.

In spite of that generous bounty, no one was ready for December 23rd, 1927, the day that Santa Claus robbed the First National Bank of Cisco. The whole situation would have been a comedy of the highest order, if so many innocent people hadn't ended up dead.

Marshall Ratliff had once worked in the oil fields outside of Cisco and knew how much money was being put into the town's bank each week just for payroll. Ratliff was also a convicted felon; after robbing the bank at Valera, he'd served one year in prison before being paroled by Governor Miriam Ferguson. Ratliff was planning the Cisco robbery while living in Wichita Falls. His accomplices were Henry Helms, Robert Hill and Louis Davis.

The robbers believed their plans were airtight, but there was one small problem; Ratliff realized that as a former resident of Cisco himself, he would be recognized. So he decided he needed a disguise. As it was just a few days before Christmas, the only thing Ratliff could find was a Santa Claus outfit. Midge Tellet, the woman who owned the boarding house where he was staying in Wichita Falls, loaned it to him.

The four men then stole a car and drove south, arriving in Cisco on the morning of December 23, 1927. Ratliff got out of the car a couple of blocks away from the bank and walked the final distance, his fellow thieves driving slowly behind him.

That was the first problem. For some reason, Ratliff hadn't thought about the fact that children, seeing Santa Claus on a city street a couple of days before Christmas, might be attracted to him. In fact, they were all over him. He was forced to lose the kids in a side alley, where he met up with the other three men.

From there, the three men and Santa entered the First National Bank of Cisco and announced the hold-up.

Immediately Mrs. B. P. Blassengame and her daughter ran for the bank's front door and out into the street, screaming at the top of her lungs that ... Santa Claus was robbing the bank.

Cisco's chief of police, Bit Bedford, heard her cries, and so did most of the men within a two-block area. All of them grabbed their rifles and guns, knowing they had a good chance at that $5,000 bankers' bounty if they killed Santa while he was robbing the bank.

Back inside the First National, the four robbers were cleaning up. They got $12,400 in cash, $150,000 in nonnegotiable securities; it was an absolutely remarkable bank haul.

But, as they opened the door to make their getaway, (song plays: Song Title, by Artist's Name). Now to this day no one knows how many of Cisco's citizens stood outside the bank waiting, armed and looking to earn that five grand reward, but the records claim it was a big mob. There were at least 200 bullet holes found

in the bank's walls after the battle.

Unfortunately, the robbers used the bank's customers as shields and fired back. Both the chief of police and his deputy were killed, six of the bank's customers wounded. Santa Claus Ratliff and Louis Davis were wounded, Davis seriously.

The robbers took two small girls, Laverne Comer and Emma May Robertson, to use as hostages in their getaway. Once in their car, they discovered the second problem: Not one of the four had remembered to buy gas before the holdup. Their gas tank was almost empty.

The robbers headed out of town as fast as they could, with Cisco's citizens hot on their tails and shooting the whole time. And that's when Santa and his bank-robbing elves thought they'd caught a break; the gang caught 14-year-old Woody Harris driving his father's Oldsmobile and pulled him over. He surrendered his father's car, but he grabbed the keys while no one was looking.

The robbers, still under fire from the enraged citizens closing in quickly behind them, moved their loot, hostages and Davis to the Olds before realizing they had no way to start it.

Santa and two of his men ran back to the original getaway car, leaving Davis to die from his wounds. That was their third mistake: In their haste, they left the bank's money in the Oldsmobile with Davis. The town's posse, finding the loot in the Olds, temporarily gave up the chase. The two little girls and the bullet-riddled car were found abandoned outside of town.

Over the next two days the remaining robbers stole three more cars. Finally, as they were trying to cross the Brazos, Young County's Sheriff Foster and Cy Bradford, a Texas Ranger, gave chase. Bradford reportedly put lead into all three bandits.

Though wounded, Helms and Hill managed to escape. But Marshall Ratliff, a.k.a. Santa Claus, was taken in, and Helms and Hill were picked up later.

All three were tried; Hill was given 99 years. He escaped from prison three times, but was always caught. Paroled in 1945, he changed his name, moved to Midland and became a successful businessman. Helms, blamed for killing the sheriff and his deputy, received the death sentence.

That left Santa Claus. On January 27, 1928, Ratliff too received a 99-year sentence for armed robbery. But, two months later, he was also given the death sentence for killing the sheriff and his deputy, in spite of the fact that there was no testimony to that effect.

Making matters worse for Santa, a local judge in Eastland County got a bench warrant to try him for attempting to steal the Harris' Oldsmobile. He was sent back to Cisco, the scene of the crime - where, in an escape attempt, he mortally wounded a jailer.

Now, Texans tend to have their own sense of justice. More than 1,000 people had gathered at the jail by the following morning, demanding that Santa be turned over to them for a necktie party. They got a belated Christmas gift, Marshall Ratliff, a.k.a. Santa Claus, and strung him up.

But the knot came undone. Ratliff, on his knees and choking, looked up at the mob and said, "God have mercy and forgive me." I don't know how God responded to that request, but our Texas mob just tried again. The knot held the second time.

Today, sadly, mistrust is everywhere. Many people get on airliners and worry when people of Middle Eastern descent are on the same flight. And we'll never know how long it took the children of Cisco, Texas, to trust Santa Claus again - or their fathers, who had all shot at jolly old Saint Nick that day.

The people of Cisco still take pride in the fact that Hilton started his hotel career in their small West Texas town. And they proudly pass out booklets to visitors, describing the day the town tried to kill one particular Santa and his bank-robbing elves.

76. Fooling Around Through History

Well, you knew that eventually we'd get around to setting the record straight on sex in America. However, because it's still early on Saturday morning, and I know there are kids out there, if you're worried that they might listen, please turn your radio down.

Nothing starts a national debate these days faster than the discussion of fooling around. Should we teach it in school? What can we do about teenage pregnancies? Abortion: Should we have that right or is it wrong? And just how as a society did we degenerate to the point we're at today, where these questions go unanswered and yet the debate continues?

That last one's easy. It has happened because no one knows the real story of sex in this country, and no one realizes how our forefathers saw the subject of sex, much less the practice. In fact, many today believe that we should live by the standards of the Puritans - by which they mean that we should be imbued with the haunting fear that someone, somewhere, may be having a good time. Or at least, that's what we think was the Puritan ideal. That's the image they now have.

However, history tells us a completely different story. It may surprise you, but Puritans believed that sex was a good thing. And they talked about it openly, as if it were no big deal. No one in proper society would even think of doing so today, except maybe in a confessional, but the Puritans discussed sex in their church councils.

No, they weren't obsessed; the Puritans were just being practical. Their openness stemmed from exactly the same everyday fact of life that made sex education classes unnecessary back then: Kids knew all about sex, from the time they could talk.

Oh, it's true. Think about it. Aside from the fact that domestic animals were everywhere, doing what comes naturally, consider that the average Puritan home was just one room. Everybody sat in the same room, ate in the same room and slept in the same room. Therefore, when you got a little amorous with your spouse, the kids were just a couple feet away in their beds. Nobody thought anything about it, because no one could afford the extra bedroom for parental privacy. And consider this: Until we all moved into suburban homes, farmers in their sod homes on the prairies and most tenement dwellers in the city still camped the entire family in one room, be it home or apartment. Surely, some parents wanted to enjoy their privacy, but it just wasn't practical.

Need more proof of how the Puritans regarded sex? The First Church of Boston had to hear the case of James Mattock. Seems his wife complained that he hadn't fooled around with her for a couple of years. That Puritan Church debated the subject and expelled Mattock from membership for not fooling around with his wife. Doesn't sound too prudish to me. Sounds like the Puritan Church was endorsing sex.

The Puritans had another strong belief, one that will shock you today. If you saw the movie The Patriot you'll remember it: The Puritans believed that no one should be allowed to marry unless they first slept with their potential partner, thereby proving their compatibility.

The practice was called bundling, and there were some rules and conditions to it. The kids either had to keep their clothes on, or the male was sewn into a bundling blanket. In either case, kids being kids, they found ways around the bundling blanket or their clothes. Like simply taking them off. As proof of that, we find that during the period of 1720 to 1740, babies were born to 10% of all Puritan couples within seven months of the wedding. Human gestation periods haven't changed in the last million years, folks. You've got to believe that fooling around wasn't absolutely unknown to the teenagers of those colonies.

It gets worse. In the 20 years before the Revolution, officials in Concord, Massachusetts, reported that fully half of all babies born there were conceived out of wedlock. That's a higher rate than today's. Still worried about our kids?

As to that Scarlet Letter stuff: It's true, New Plymouth passed a law against adulterers in 1636. And if

you got caught you were supposed to wear a large AD on your clothes. But the law was rarely if ever enforced; and convicted adulterers weren't thrown out of the church for their indiscretions, either. That's right, Puritans were more tolerant of those who fooled around on their spouses than we are.

In the 1800s we find that marriage handbooks were all the rage; millions of them were sold in this country. And yes, they outlined sexual practices and had very graphic drawings in them showing the best ... angles of attack, as it were.

These books even encouraged women to let themselves go. One book by Dr. Frederick Hollick had this passage in it. "Both beings are thrown into a species of mental ecstasy and bodily fever, during which all other thoughts and functions are totally suspended." Heady stuff for the 1800s. It kind of makes you wonder about your great-great grandparents, doesn't it?

It's a well-known fact that the West was settled by men of real pioneering spirit ... and prostitutes. But most don't realize that prostitution was a legally recognized business in St. Louis until the late 1860s. That's when church leaders got involved and had legislation passed against it. By the way, they've been doing that ever since.

New York City, after doing a census study on its ladies of the night in 1870, figured 10,000 were making a living there. In 1890 the city looked at those figures again; sure enough, there were 40,000 shady ladies plying their trade in the Big Apple. The Victorian Age was a boom time for soiled doves.

Were you all over Bill Clinton for fooling around with Monica? In 1884 our nation elected Grover Cleveland to the presidency - admittedly, by the narrowest of margins - after he'd admitted that he might have fathered a baby out of wedlock.

Abortion is a subject likely to bring on many heated debates today. And I'd like to say we're not taking either side of that debate today. However, we do act like we're the first generation to even attempt to accept abortion rights. But, again, that's totally wrong. You see, there wasn't one law against abortion in America for our first 200 years, 1620 to 1820.

Moreover, even after laws were passed, very few abortionists were ever successfully prosecuted. Granted, from 1849 to 1858, Massachusetts brought legal charges against 32 abortionists. Each one went to trial, and juries refused to convict a single one. All 32 were set free to go on about their trade.

Why? Again, a commonsense reason: In those days, the mother often died during either pregnancy or delivery. Additionally, with no method of reliable birth control, families could easily find themselves with more mouths than they could possibly feed. So, between the prospect of having 10 or 12 children and the possibility of seeing your beloved wife die in childbirth, abortion was common in America, and welcomed by the majority of both sexes. And this occurred at a time when we were considered a true "God-fearing" nation.

Moreover, it was science, not religious groups, that gave abortions a bad name. Seems that before the days of the improved microscope, the scientific belief was that it was the man who injected a baby into the woman. That's right, people believed that babies came from men, and that women were just the carriers of the unborn children. But, once science found out that there was an egg inside a woman, and the man simply fertilized it, then the concept of when life truly began changed the argument.

Here's the stunning part. Even back then abortions were considered wrong once a woman felt the quickening of the unborn child, about three months into the pregnancy. That's when women felt the baby was a real person; sounds like first trimester stuff to me, but that's the time frame women have always put on personhood.

By government and medical figures, 15% of all pregnancies ended in abortion from 1850 to 1900. It hit its peak in the 1920s, when close to one in four births were prevented that way. We should also point out that the preaching of free love didn't start with the hippie movement of the '60s. It was the Free Love Society, which started in the 1890s, that gave us that concept. Their speakers were in demand nationwide.

So, where did we get this puritanical view of Puritan beliefs about sex, when actually the Puritans may have been more tolerant than we are today? Ah, the Victorian Age. Not that it didn't have its sinners also. But, aping the reticent British and the Victorian Era's upper crust, America's upper-class society decided that it wasn't proper to discuss such matters in public. And, because you didn't discuss those matters publicly, then the subject of sex must be - let's say it together - dirty.

Let's face it, the rich in Victorian society enjoyed it, they just decided it was wrong to admit it. That's why movies were so popular when they first came out. Many of the original films showed the scandals of the wealthy: Murder, rape, adultery and so on. The common people loved it because it showed the upper class as total hypocrites. Which, of course, they were. That's why common folks loved the movies, and why the upper class hated them, when they first went into widespread distribution.

However, once we as a nation moved into the middle class ourselves, we upgraded our public persona, fashioning our manners into an imitation of the old rich Victorians'. That included not talking about sex in public and putting on the air of having high moral standards. This in spite of the fact that in our real lives, nothing has changed since man first walked upright.

So, to those of you who believe that this age we live in is the most decadent in American history: Think again. Which one of you would encourage your kids to sleep together before they got married? The Puritans did. Which one of you has bought explicit sex manuals? Your great, great grandparents did in the early 1800s. Worried about the teenage pregnancy rates? That's been happening since the beginning of time. Worried about your kids' overhearing you and the spouse? Again, remember that for the most part we used to live in one-room dwellings. That situation couldn't be helped.

And, until the 1920s, abortion was quite common - and wasn't contested by anyone, including juries made up of God-fearing Americans.

Of course, the only reason you believe we've somehow become a more decadent society is because no one ever told you that even the Puritans thought sex was a normal human function.

77. The Real Modern American Crime

A young Frederick T. Stanley founded what today is known as Stanley Tools in 1843, in a one-storey wooden building in New Britain, Connecticut. At the time, he was known for making exceptional hinges, bolts and door hardware, which would help American society expand. Long before it became the standard for American goods, Stanley's vision was one of unsurpassed customer service, continuous product innovation and solid business integrity. In fact, the reputation of Stanley's products grew so quickly that, shortly after the end of the Civil War, he would be exporting his goods internationally.

Surprisingly, it was the 1857 acquisition of a relative's business, Stanley Rule and Level Company, that would put him into the business of manufacturing tools. These days, it's safe to say that most everyone has used a Stanley product; you know, the ones with the bright yellow handles.

Stanley was finally incorporated in 1899. Over the decades, many immigrants found their first jobs there, making the tools that made America and earning enough to afford a family, put their kids through school and one day retire with at least a modest degree of comfort.

What's more, Stanley's success brought others to New Britain who wanted to duplicate Stanley's success. Once upon a time, when you drove up the road from Hartford into New Britain, the sign that greeted you as you entered the town read, Hardware Capital of the World. And it was.

But most of that ended with the Second World War. The immigrants' sons, who had been raised on the wages that Stanley paid their parents, went off to war and then on to college, on the GI bill. Increased productivity started taking its toll on Stanley's competitors; and one by one they either slowly drifted away to the South, where wages were much cheaper, or simply shut their doors forever. When only Stanley was left, the city of New Britain took down the sign that had welcomed visitors to the city by reminding them where America's tools were built

But, in spite of this change in the country, Stanley succeeded; in fact, the company hadn't even lost money during the Great Depression. And by 1999, for the 100 years Stanley had been incorporated, every 90 days, like clockwork, they paid a dividend to their shareholders; and Stanley was coming off a year in which almost $3 billion worth of Stanley products had been sold. In that year, the company's new CEO, John Trani, was asked to ring the opening bell for the New York Stock Exchange. .

It was a celebration of a uniquely American company's 100 years of success and a way of marking 100 years of paying out dividends to Stanley's shareholders. John Trani, freshly in from General Electric, was proud to open the New York Stock Exchange that day.

But he couldn't stay long. Trani had to leave immediately after he rang the bell, because he was needed back in New Britain, where four hours later he dismissed 4,500 of Stanley's American workers. Within days he had their machines, tools and dies crated up and shipped to China, where his cost of production fell by 85%. $129 million worth of payroll for Americans disappeared that day, even though Stanley had been making more than decent money.

Of course, that payroll wasn't the only savings. The international exchange rate between the Yuan and the dollar made Stanley tools even less expensive when brought back to America; and, after all, Stanley made 90% of its profits in this country.

Still, John Trani now faced a new problem. Obviously, with 4,500 fewer employees and a favorable exchange rate to import tools back from China, Stanley would now be making more money than it had ever made before. Now to you and me, that would be a good thing, but Trani started thinking just how unfair paying federal taxes was. Oh sure, taxes paid for the roads to the Stanley Works; other people's taxes had paid for John Trani's education; taxes had paid for the nation's courts, which protected Stanley's thousands of patents - and taxes had even paid for the Patent Office that granted those devices, which protected Stanley's inventions.

But, in John Trani's mind, any taxes are just wrong. So in 2001, reading BusinessWeek magazine, he was struck by an article reporting that Tyco International had cut its federal taxes by a half billion dollars, just by owning a mailbox in Bermuda and reincorporating the company there. In Trani's mind, this was perfect: First you run a very successful company; you fire your American workforce and hire Chinese, and get a favorable exchange rate to import the tools. And then you move your mailbox to Bermuda and save $30 million a year in taxes. In fact, you pay virtually no taxes at all.

Trani told his chief financial officer to look into it; he came back with the news that it was legal, and it would work.

Of course, there was a problem. In order to reincorporate in Bermuda, Stanley would have to get the shareholders' approval; and many of those outstanding shares in the company were held in trust by Stanley's former workers, many of them now unemployed.

Additionally, the Mayor of New Britain started blasting Trani publicly, talking about his Faustian deal to give America cheap, imported goods instead of good jobs. He also said, "There are people here in town that are walking around with missing fingers and hunchbacks that made Stanley, but Trani doesn't want to hear that."

Trani still had to sell his shareholders on moving the mailbox to Bermuda so Stanley could get out of paying federal taxes. At one meeting Nancy Mischaud stood up and asked him pointedly, "Where is your American pride?" Trani replied, "I look at it every day in the mirror."

But, without the votes from the Stanley employee retirement trust, he didn't have enough yeas to get the deal done; and Stanley's workers weren't about to vote to have the company move overseas to evade taxation. So a letter went out to them that read, "Any unvoted shares will count against reincorporation." That's what the workers wanted to hear, and so they threw their proxy votes away.

Then came a second, undated letter, which was written in legalese and hard for most of Stanley's workers and fired employees to understand. It reversed the position of the first letter: Now any unvoted shares would count toward reincorporating in Bermuda.

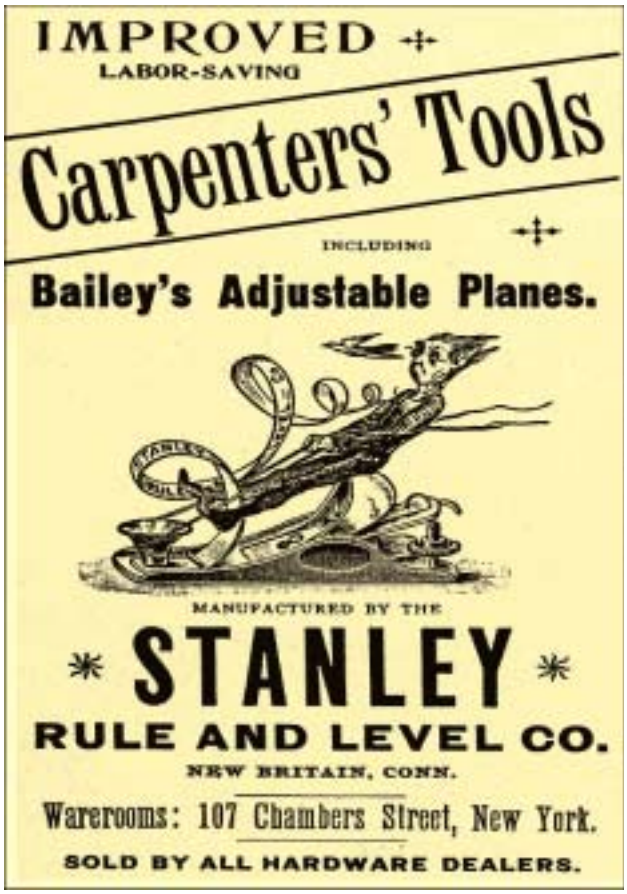
The day of the shareholders' meeting came and, for the first time in Stanley's 159-year history, reporters were not allowed inside. Trani held shareholders to a 30-minute question period, one in which he wouldn't answer any hard interrogation. Then came the vote, and 67.2% went for Bermuda.

There was just one problem. Richard Blumenthal, Connecticut's Attorney General, had evidence proving that Trani had rigged the vote by sending out two different letters explaining how the retirement proxy votes would be counted. And the next day he filed suit against Stanley and Trani. The AG's office was demanding every e-mail, every letter and every aspect of this move to Bermuda, and Trani's people got the

hint, either disavow that vote or face the wrath of the Attorney General and the Securities and Exchange Commission. Trani didn't disavow the vote, but said that in fairness to all, it would be retaken.

But, just a month later, Congress was investigating all American corporations who were buying mailboxes in Bermuda to escape their federal tax liability, and into that weighted Stanley Works. Even Congressmen, who believe that all taxes are wrong, wouldn't touch Stanley's argument with a 10-foot pole. Not because other corporations hadn't done it, not because Trani shipped all those jobs to China, not because Trani personally stood to make a fortune off the increased price of his shares once Wall Street heard that Stanley was a tax-free corporation, just as the Red Cross charity is. No, one man had changed all the rules. His name was ... Osama Bin Laden.

That's right, by the time Trani could put his plan into motion and get the illegal vote cast to reincorporate overseas, 9/11 had happened and our soldiers were already on the ground in Afghanistan. And yet here was one of the oldest, most respected companies in America, one that had never once lost money in its 100 years in business and had paid dividends to its shareholders every 90 days, wanting to get out of paying its corporate tax. Representative Scott McInnis, a former police officer from Colorado, handed Trani a card bearing the name of every solider already killed in Afghanistan and told Trani to carry it in his pocket and look at those names every time he talked about using Bermuda to quit paying American taxes.



Trani went ahead with the second vote to move to Bermuda.

Then a few weeks later Congress looked at denying American companies which held Bermuda incorporation papers the right to bid contracts for Homeland Security. Republican leadership said why not? But 100 Republicans voted with the Democrats on this one.

As Bob Dylan once said, you don't have to be a weatherman to know which way the wind blows. Trani decided he could fade or face? the heat or the anger of the American public if he reincorporated in Bermuda to escape Stanley's $30 million tax bill.

In a June 2002 interview with BusinessWeek, Trani called it patriotic to move to Bermuda to escape paying taxes, if it saves American jobs. Of course, he'd long since sent 4,500 of those American jobs to China. Trani became the poster boy for this type of tax evasion, and he was gone from Stanley not long after that.

This is a unique story. It started with Frederick Stanley in 1843, who started a small business that grew into a household name, and with the city of New Britain, which grew because of Stanley's success. It changed when one CEO shipped its jobs west to China, the year after the company grossed almost $3 billion, then wanted to ship Stanley's incorporation east to Bermuda, so the company wouldn't have to pay corporate taxes. Tiny labor costs, no tax costs.

But Stanley isn't the only American company thinking about this; others had already moved their mailboxes. I just thought you'd enjoy knowing why our deficits are so high and almost 3 million blue-collar workers can't find work.

Just in time, as you start to figure out your tax returns for last year. Then again, if you had your paychecks sent to Bermuda, they'd arrest you.

78. One Unsung Hero

America has many heroes. Many of them, unfortunately, are either overrated or frankly don't deserve credit for the things it's claimed they did. Meanwhile, other truly important figures in our history have been simply ignored.

Ethan Allen and his Green Mountain Boys are one example: Overrated. Allen was closer in mindset to Timothy McVeigh than to George Washington. Stole lands from his neighbors, kidnapped officers of the law, fought in only one battle that we give him credit for helping to win. (On the other hand, the Battle of Fort Ticonderoga was won because of Benedict Arnold, but we don't give him credit for that because he turned traitor later in the war.)

Later in the Revolution, Allen tried to take Vermont out of the war by giving the land to Canada. He was also brought up for treason by the Continental Congress; they figured it was best just to let him go. It was that or face letting Americans know that there was more than one Benedict Arnold in our army during the Revolution.

Davey Crockett was another overrated hero. A juvenile delinquent who later deserted his wife, he lost a third term in Congress and simply left his state in disgust. Most who knew him thought him something of a village idiot. And, although we remember him as a real frontiersman, he missed hitting a buffalo in a shooting contest, got lost shortly thereafter, and lost his horse on the same trip. He may have "killed a bar when he was only three," but he was attacked by a cougar and ended up captured by the Comanche.

Sure, he ended up at the Alamo, but he surrendered and was killed after the battle.

Abe Lincoln wasn't the Great Emancipator, though he certainly had his upside in many matters of national importance.

The point is this: Each one of those men showed bravery mainly during one important period in our history.

Still, there are Americans who never wavered, not once, and yet history doesn't tell us that they even existed, much less inform us of their heroism.

Here's one for you: Joshua Barney. Never heard of him? Don't feel bad, neither had I before a month ago. Barney was the most unique of American heroes. He served with distinction in not one, but two of our most famous wars. He was resourceful, had real courage and never bragged about his exploits after the wars were over. He didn't do the things he did for personal glory, he did them because he felt honor bound to.

Joshua Barney was born in 1759 in Baltimore, Maryland. And he enlisted in our navy when he was only 17, at the start of the Revolution. Barney was a natural seaman. In fact, I'll tell you how good he was: Barney was given his own ship to command while he was still a teenager.

During our Revolution he was involved in no fewer than 35 naval battles. His most famous exploit during that war was capturing the British naval ship the General Monk in Delaware Bay. That is, it deserves fame: Barney's own ship, outgunned 2 to 1, was nowhere near the size of the British vessel.

Barney was captured three times by the British during the Revolution; he managed to escape twice. And each time he went right back to his command and right back into battle.

At a time when most Americans didn't even know we had a national flag, the Stars and Stripes, Joshua Barney was the first military officer to use our flag for recruitment. He would later be the man who ordered the purchase of an American flag for Fort McHenry in the War of 1812 — the flag that inspired Francis Scott Key to write The Star Spangled Banner.

In fact, when the Revolution was over, it was Joshua Barney who carried the Stars and Stripes into the French National Assembly when we received diplomatic recognition from them.

Not bad for an American hero that no one has ever heard of.

But there's more. Joshua Barney came back for the War of 1812. At first he took a commission as a privateer, meaning he had authorization to capture British ships bringing supplies to their army fighting here. In the first year of that war Barney captured no fewer than 18 British vessels.

The next year Barney submitted a plan for the protection of the Chesapeake Bay, and with it, the naval

protection of Washington. In 1814 he was given a flotilla of ships and told to put his plan into action.

But this was one battle that he didn't win. The British navy managed to block his small boats into a river off the Chesapeake; when he realized he couldn't retake the bay, Barney burned his ships rather than let them fall into British hands.

And he didn't stop there. No, Joshua Barney knew that the British were on their way to Washington, so he gathered up his 400 sailors and headed for Bladensburg, to join up with our regular army and halt the British advance.

The British attacked in overwhelming numbers, and quickly our lines broke into retreat — with one exception. That's right; Joshua Barney and his men never gave an inch of ground. Didn't retreat, just stood their ground against the British. And that's when Joshua Barney was shot; he survived, but was taken prisoner by the British. His war days were over.

Barney died four years later in Pittsburgh, but that shouldn't be held against him. He enlisted in our navy at only 17 years of age and fought 35 naval battles in the Revolution, taking one of the largest British warships in that conflict, against all odds. He was captured three times and escaped twice; he was the first to use our national flag for military recruitment. In the War of 1812, Barney was the only commander who wouldn't retreat before the British Army marching on Washington.

Now, I'm sure this man had his flaws; but, unlike Crockett and many others, bragging wasn't one of them. However, sadly, because Barney wasn't one to brag, history has totally forgotten him. That doesn't alter the fact that this man gave his all in not one, but two of the most important wars in our history.

Just a little something to think about as we continue with our war on terrorism. Not all the heroes are those we see on CNN. Most of them will be people just doing the best they can for their country, for no other reason than feeling honor bound to do their part. And they never back down.

The ones who don't brag are probably the biggest heroes of all. It's a shame that history refuses to remember and honor them.

79. Keep Your Enemies Closer

Think carefully before you dance to the drum beatings during a time of war. You don't know who'll be dancing on our side after the conflict.

Most everyone knows our public posture on weapons of mass destruction; particularly in the case of chemical weapons, the United States is dead set against them. Then we discover, on some TV news report, that we've been stockpiling them for years - just in case, don't you know.

And we've all been sickened by stories about Josef Mengele's medical experiments on humans in Nazi concentration camps during the Second World War. We know how people hunted him for decades, trying to bring him to justice.

Finally, from a propaganda viewpoint, there was nothing more despicable in the forties than being a Nazi. After all, isn't that why we had all those tribunals, so we could punish or execute those who had most harmed humanity during the war? You may not remember it, but as a result of the Nuremberg Trials in Germany many members of the Nazi party were imprisoned, if not put to death. There were military tribunals for the worst of the worst in the Japanese military. The public demanded justice for war criminals, and it was given to them. Kind of.

A couple of guys, however, did far more to kill more innocent people during the Second World War - one for the Japanese and one for the Germans. And not only did they not face trial after the conflict, but we brought them to America and paid them well to advise our government - in creating, you guessed it, weapons of mass destruction.

We'll start with the easy one, Werner Von Braun. Of course you know his name, simply because we give him so much credit for getting our space program going in the fifties. But that's not really the whole story. You see, Von Braun was a card-carrying Nazi, which made it illegal for him even to enter the United States after the war. More on that later.

From a scientific viewpoint, Von Braun's work for his German masters during the war had to do with creating the V-1 and V-2 rockets. Called terror weapons at the time, they had one purpose and one purpose only: To inflict as much damage and kill as many innocent British civilians as possible. Wait, you protest? You say that Von Braun was simply doing what he had been ordered to do by his superiors? Well, every high-ranking Nazi tried to use exactly that feeble excuse, and not one tribunal judge accepted it. No: Von Braun knew exactly how his rockets were being used. And he could have done things to make those weapons of death, say, a little less reliable.

It wouldn't have mattered. Von Braun would never have been prosecuted when the war was over, because we wanted this former Nazi right here in America, helping us with our missile program.

The one little inconvenience in bringing Von Braun to this country was that pesky law, the one denying Nazis a visa.

No problem; the best legal minds in Washington worked out a simple solution. Declaring Huntsville, Alabama, an open prisoner of war camp, Washington simply termed Werner Von Braun a "non-confined POW." And with that, a former enemy became one of our top scientists.

The more shocking story concerns Unit 731, a Japanese medical group operating outside of Harbin, China. The atrocities committed there by Lt. General Shiro Ishii made Josef Mengele look like a Boy Scout. For Unit 731's only job was to do the worst kind of medical experiments on living subjects. One of the unit's most horrendous experiments occurred when they were trying to create a plague bomb. Putting bubonic plague on fleas, loading them in bombs and dropping them on Chinese cities nearby, Unit 731 tried to determine how many could be killed without ever knowing what had hit them.

Other experiments on prisoners of war in Unit 731 involved frostbite, to see what would happen to a person who literally had a leg or an arm completely frozen. Every infectious disease known to man was injected into Ishii's subjects - Russian, Chinese, Korean and, yes, American soldiers. In all, Unit 731's heinous experiments killed more than 3,000 prisoners.

And the worst was yet to come. Once Japan realized that it would lose the war, and knowing that the Russian army was fast approaching Harbin, General Ishii destroyed his lab equipment. He also ordered the last 400 prisoners killed and cremated, lest the world discover what he and his staff had done there. Ishii did one other thing: He hid all of his notes on his work.
Then came his day of reckoning - again ... kind of.

You see, our intelligence services knew about Unit 731 and its experiments, and they knew that General Ishii had been in charge of the death camp. But he was never tried, nor was his assistant, Masaji Kitano. So what if they were the worst butchers of the Second World War? So what if their experiments violated every canon of decency or humanity? America needed men like Ishii and Kitano - to help us with our biological military weapons.

So we didn't try those men; we brought them to America, where they lectured and taught our military scientists everything they knew about biological warfare.

Kitano went home to Japan in the early fifties. He became president of Green Cross, a Japanese drug company, and remained a respected member of the Japanese medical community. Ishii, on the other hand, stayed right here. And he helped us create all those chemical weapons whose safe disposal worries us today. The same chemical weapons designed to be put on the rockets that Werner

Von Braun helped us create - the same chemical weapons that we now fear some terrorist will set loose inside our borders.

In every war we have enemies. And in most conflicts, we're assured that all those who help our enemies will be nullified. We shouldn't allow ourselves to be so misled; the worst of the worst never seem to be prosecuted. They end up on Washington's payroll, teaching us what they know, usually in secret. That's the real way of the world.

80. A Klannish White House

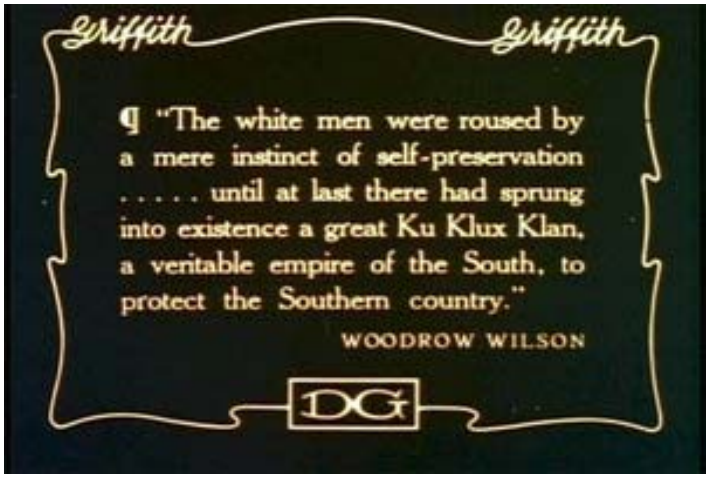
Now that Bill Clinton is long out of office, certainly there's going to be another debate on who has been the worst president of the last 100 years. And, while many of you already have a president in mind that you feel could easily fall into that category, I believe our worst president, and the one whose actions still haunt America today, is none other than Woodrow Wilson. A man whom high-school history books remember quite fondly today.

If you remember what you've been taught, Wilson is best known as a pacifist who reluctantly took America into the First World War, and then valiantly tried to get us to join the League of Nations to ensure world peace. He's remembered as a former head of Princeton University, a true intellectual in the White House. Of course, what Wilson really was is nothing less than a white supremacist with a bigot's soul.

Doubt that statement? Let's start out with a few facts. First, Wilson was born in 1856, before the Civil War, in Virginia. Fairly wealthy, his family held black servants before the war. As a young man, he sat through many of his father's friends' stories of the War Between the States; he often heard how Reconstruction and the elevation of blacks were destroying what was left of the South. Such childhood impressions left an indelible mark on the young man.

Of course, before he became president, Wilson was the head of Princeton. While that sounds intellectual today, the fact is that at the time Wilson governed Princeton, it was the one and only major Northern university that still barred blacks from attending. This at a time when Teddy Roosevelt had appointed an African American to be our Postmaster General.

Come to think of it, you may remember that blacks were given many jobs with the government after the Civil War during Reconstruction. Blacks were often made tax collectors, postmasters and civil servants, albeit usually by appointment and in primarily black communities. Still, their employment showed at least a little progress for blacks in America.


Griffith
Griffith
¶ "The white men were roused by a mere instinct of self-preservation . . . . . until at last there had sprung into existence a great Ku Klux Klan, a veritable empire of the South, to protect the Southern country."
WOODROW WILSON
DG

Here's the confusing part that you can't answer. You remember reading in school that some improvement in black life took place after the Civil War - yet no one can pinpoint how we went from that progress to having total segregation again less than a century later, which in turn led to the sixties' civil rights movement.

We blame these things on the Jim Crow, "separate but equal" laws, but when did they come about?

Reconstruction's progress didn't slowly drift away, as history books now say it did. Nor did it disappear because of the Jim Crow laws. It died suddenly, and Woodrow Wilson killed that progress; a son of the South, Wilson despised people of any nationality other than white Anglo Saxon.

It's worth noting here that, up to that point, African Americans had primarily been Republicans. But when Wilson first ran for the presidency, among other things he promised to sponsor new civil rights legislation, which would diminish the effect of the Jim Crow laws. Those who knew Wilson best were stunned at these promises of equal rights: They knew that Wilson was a white supremacist, and his wife was even worse. However, like most politicians, once elected Wilson forgot all his campaign promises. Further, Wilson not only broke his promises, he actually did exactly the opposite: He submitted legislation to the Congress that would have curtailed civil rights for America's black citizens. When Congress refused to pass his legislation, Woodrow Wilson, under Executive Order, segregated our government overnight. That's right, Wilson undid 50 years of racial progress by Executive Order. And the government's employment of blacks was the one thing that even approached holding back the Jim Crow laws.

When black government employees in the South protested, Wilson fired them all. When a black delegation went to the White House to protest those firings, Wilson screamed at them and threw them out.

In 1916 the Black Advisory Committee issued a statement that read in part: "No sooner had this Democratic Administration come into power than Mr. Wilson and his advisors entered up a policy to eliminate all colored citizens from representation in the federal government."

It gets worse. The movie Birth of a Nation was a classic piece of filmmaking, but it gave rise to the rebirth of the Ku Klux Klan. It portrayed blacks after the Civil War as being either lazy and shiftless or violent thieves who raped white women. It depicted the Ku Klux Klan as the savior of the white race. Wilson played the movie over and over in the White House, and he spoke publicly on its brilliant and accurate portrayal of the South after the war.

Don't kid yourself; great movie-making it arguably was, but Birth of a Nation was also the most racist piece of trash existing until Hitler wrote Mein Kampf, and we know what that did to the Jewish people. Maybe Wilson loved the film because it was based on The Clansman, a book written by Thomas Dixon, Wilson's former college roommate.

When Birth of a Nation opened in Atlanta, the Klan paraded through the city 25,000 members strong. And because of Wilson's public endorsement, the movie led to massive growth in Klan membership nationally. One admitted Klan member was President Warren G. Harding.

Still think Wilson was a misunderstood idealist? It was Wilson, at the League of Nations Convention, who personally vetoed the proposed provision of equality for all races.

That's right. African Americans were done in by a Democrat who promised them stronger civil rights - just so he could get elected.

Now, about his supposed reluctance to get us involved in foreign conflicts, his having to be dragged kicking and screaming into committing us to the First World War. No American president in our history got the nation involved in more wars.

Besides the First World War, during his administration Wilson sent troops to Mexico in 1914, Haiti in 1915, the Dominican Republic in 1916, back to Mexico in 1916 and nine more times before he left office, Cuba in 1917, and Panama in 1918. (Wilson didn't like Latinos, either: Too uppity for his taste.) It was also Wilson who sent American troops into the Russian Revolution in 1918. Obviously, Wilson had no problem whatsoever putting American troops into foreign conflicts. He did it, seemingly, every chance he got.

So, how is it that a president whom high-school history books today call an intellectual giant was the man who ruined the progress we'd made between the races in this country? How could a so-called pacifist have committed us to all those foreign civil wars? Talk about sanitizing history.

Not only did he restart internal strife by bringing back segregation and discrimination, but Wilson was also the first president to involve us in foreign conflicts without asking Congress for a declaration of war.

Our problems with race today, and the segregation that still exists in modern America, have their roots in the racist decisions of Woodrow Wilson. The right-wing dictators of Central and Latin America, Battista,

Somoza, Trujillo, Castro, and Duvalier, all got their start with armed intervention by American soldiers in their countries - again, ordered by Wilson.

The Cold War and Russia's distrust of us stemmed from Wilson's sending American troops to fight the Bol sheviks in their Revolution.

Before you answer that Wilson was just an idealist trying to save the world, listen to the words of former Marine Corps Commandant General Smedley Butler, the most honored solider in the country before the Second World War. This is Butler, discussing fighting under Wilson's Executive Orders. "I helped make Mexico safe for American oil interests in 1914. I helped make Haiti and Cuba a decent place for the National City Bank boys to collect their money. I helped purify Nicaragua for the international banking house of Brown Brothers. I brought light to the Dominican Republic for American sugar interests in 1916. I helped make Honduras right for American fruit companies. Looking back on it, I might have given Al Capone a few hints."

For the last 80 years America has been trying to live down the legacy of Woodrow Wilson, without even knowing that he was the one who divided the nation. Wilson was a racist. He helped bring right-wing dictators into power throughout Latin America. He segregated blacks and whites in this country, and we still bear the scars of those racial hatreds. He fought Russia, for which they still don't trust us - not that we trusted them. His decisions were what really started the Cold War.

As his final act, Wilson laughed at Ho Chi Minh when he asked to have Viet Nam become a protectorate of the United States - and that act sowed the seeds of the Vietnam War. But that's another story.

No, Wilson wasn't a great president. He wasn't even an average one. He can best be described as evil. His hatred for blacks, Latinos, Russians and Germans was so intense that the programs he set in motion, and the venom he spewed, are still poisoning us today - 80 years later.

We should also point out that, for all the reasons we just mentioned, Wilson was not remembered fondly from the end of his presidency until the mid-fifties. That's when the Democrats rewrote Wilson's history, to remove the taint of his legacy from their party.

Now you know the real Woodrow Wilson, the one you never read about in today's history books. Between Bill Clinton's administration and Wilson's, there's no contest as to whose was worst. About all they have in common is that they were both Democrats.

The Following Pages Comprise the Authors and Their Magnificent Books That Have Been the Inspriation for the First Four Years of the Backside of American History
Ed

1776, Year of Illusions
Thomas Fleming
W. W. Norton
Copyright 1975

1912
Wilson, Roosevelt, Taft & Debs-the Election That Changed the Country
James Chance
Simon & Schuster
Copyright 2004

A Concise History of the Middle East
Arthur Goldschmidt Jr.
Westview Books
Copyright 2002

A Peace to End All Peace
David Fromkin
Owl Books
Copyright 1989

All the Shah's Men
An American Coup and the Roots of Middle East Terror
Stephen Kinzer
John Wiley & Sons
Copyright 2003

Allen Dulles, Master of Spies
James Srodes
Regnery Books
Copyright 1999

America's Forgotten Pandemic
The Influenza of 1918
Alfred W. Crosby
Cambridge University Press
Copyright 1989

America's Nazis
A History of the German American Bund
Susan Canedy
Markgraf Publications
Copyright 1990

American Axis, The
Max Wallace
St. Martins Press
Copyright 2001

American Brutus
John Wilkes Booth and the Lincoln Conspiracies
Michael W. Kauffman
Random House
Copyright 2004

American Extremists
John George and Laird Wilcox
Prometheus
Copyright 1996

American in 1900
Noel Jacob Kent
M. E. Sharpe
Copyright 2000

American Populism
A Social History
Robert C. McMath Jr.
Hill and Wang
Copyright 1992

American's Secret War Against Bolshevism
U. S. Intervention in the Russian Civil War
David S. Foglesong
Chapel Hill
Copyright 1995

Arabs, The
A History
Philip K. Hitti
McMillan and Company
Copyright 1944

Autobiography of Harry S. Truman
Harry S. Truman
Edited by Robert H. Ferrell
Colorado Associated University Press
Copyright 1980

Benjamin Franklin
An American Life
Walter Isaacson
Simon & Schuster
Copyright 2003

Bible and the Sword, The
Barbara W. Tuchman
Ballantine Books
Copyright 1956

Big D
Triumphs and Troubles of an American Supercity in the 20th Century
Darwin Payne
Three Forks Press
Copyright 2000

Biology of Doom, The
The History of America's Secret Germ Warfare Project
Ed Regis
Owl Books
Copyright 1999

Black Stork, The
Eugenics and the Death of "Defective" Babies
Martin S. Pernick
Oxford University Press
Copyright 1996

Body of Secrets
James Bamford
Doubleday
Copyright 2001

Collapse
How Societies Choose to Fail or Succeed
Jared Diamond
Viking
Copyright 2005

Coxey's Army
Carlos A. Schwantes
University of Idaho Press
Copyright 1994

Cross of Iron, A
Harry S. Truman and the Origins of the National Security State 1945-1954
Michael J. Hogan
Cambridge
Copyright 1998

Democracy in Desperation
The Depression of 1893
Douglas Steeples and David O. Whitten
Greenwood Press
Copyright 1998

Dust Bowl
The Southern Plains in the 1930s
Donald Worster
Oxford University Press
Copyright 1979

Eisenhower
Soldier and President
Stephen E. Ambrose
Touchstone Books
Copyright 1990

Ends of Power, The
H. R. Haldeman
Optimum
Copyright 1978

Factories of Death
Japanese Biological Warfare, 1932-1945
Sheldon H. Harris
Routledge
Copyright 2002

Fifties, The
David Halberstam
Village Books
Copyright 1993

First Salute, The
Barbara Tuchman
Ballantine Books
Copyright 1988

Gay Nineties in America, The
A Cultural Dictionary of the 1890s
Robert Gala
Greenwood Press
Copyright 1992

Ghost Wars
Steve Coll
Penguin Press
Copyright 2004

Grover Cleveland
Alyn Brodsky
St. Martin's Press
Copyright 2000

Higher Form of Killing, A
The Secret History of Chemical and Biological Warfare
Robert Harris and Jeremy Paxman
Hill and Wang
Copyright 1982

History of the Israeli-Palestinian Conflict
Mark Tessler
Indiana University Press
Copyright 1994

History of Iraq, The
Charles Tripp
Cambridge University Press
Copyright 2000

I Love Paul Revere, Whether He Rode or Not
Richard Shenkman
Harper Perennial
Copyright 1991

In Our Image, America's Empire in the Philippines
Stanley Karnow
Ballantine Books
Copyright 1989

John Adams
David McCullough
Simon & Schuster
Copyright 2001

Kingdom, The
Robert Lacey
Harcourt, Brace, Jovanovich
Copyright 1981

Legend, Lies and Cherished Myths of American History
Richard Shenkman
Harper and Row
Copyright 1989

Legends, Lies & Cherished Myths of World History
Richard Shenkman
Harper Perennial
Copyright 1993

Lies My Teacher Told Me
James W. Loewen
The New Press
Copyright 1995

Little Ice Age, The
Brian Fagan
Basic Books
Copyright 2000

Major Problems in the Gilded Age and the Progressive Era
Leon Fink
Houghton Mifflin
Copyright 2001

Man Who Kept the Secrets, The
Thomas Powers
Knopf
Copyright 1979

March of Folly, The
Barbara W. Tuchman
Ballantine Books
copyright 1985

Myths America Lives By
Robert T. Hughes
University of Illinois Press
Copyright 2003

Nazi Prisoners of War in America
Arnold Krammer
Scarborough House
Copyright 1979

Not So!
Paul F. Boller Jr.
Oxford University Press
Copyright 1995

One Night Stands with American History
Richard Shenkman and Kurt Reiger
Perennial Books
Copyright 2003

Opium War, The
1840-1842
Peter Ward Fay
Chapel Hill
Copyright 1975

Our Weird Wonderful Ancestors
Donald Watson
Archer and Williams
Copyright 1998

Paris 1919
Margaret McMillan
Random House
Copyright 2001

Patton
A Genius for War
Carlo d'Este
Harper Perennial
Copyright 1995

Perfectly Legal
The Covert Campaign to Rig Our Tax System to Benefit the Super Rich
David Cay Johnston
Portfolio Books
Copyright 2003

Perilous Times
Geoffrey R. Stone
W. W. Norton and Company
Copyright 2004

Philippine War, The
1899-1902
Brian McAllister Linn
University Press of Kansas
Copyright 2000

Populist Movement, The
A Short History of the Agrarian Revolt in America
Lawrence Goodwyn
Oxford University Press
Copyright 1978

Prize, The
The Epic Quest for Oil, Money & Power
Daniel Yergin
Touchstone Books
Copyright 1992

Real Lincoln, The
Thomas J. Dilorenzo
Forum Publishing
Copyright 2002

Reckless Decade, The
H. W. Brands
St. Martin's Press
Copyright 1995

Rise and Fall of Great Powers, The
Paul Kennedy
Vintage Books
Copyright 1987

Santa Claus Bank Robbery
A. C. Greene
Alfred A. Knopf
Copyright 1972

Search for Order 1877-1920
Robert H. Wiebe
Hill and Wang
Copyright 1967

That's Not in My History Book
Thomas Ayers
Taylor Trade Books
Copyright 2000

The Good Old Days-They Were Horrible
Otto L. Bettmann
Random House
Copyright 1974

The Twentieth Century
A People History
Howard Zinn
Harper Perennial
Copyright 1980

The Tyranny of Change
America in the Progressive Era, 1890-1920
John Whiteclay Chambers II
Rutgers University Press
Copyright 2001

Titan
The Life of John D. Rockefeller Sr.
Ron Chernow
Random House
Copyright 1998

Trading With the Enemy
Charles Higham
Delacorte Press
Copyright 1983

Truman
David McCullough
Simon & Schuster
Copyright 1992

Uncertainty of Everyday Life, 1915-1945
Harvey Green
University of Arkansas Press
Copyright 1992

Very Different Age, A
Americans of the Progressive Era
Steven J. Diner
Hill and Wang
Copyright 1998

Vietnam, A History
Stanley Karnow
Penguin Books
Copyright 1983

Voyage of the Frolic, The
New England Merchants and the Opium Trade
Thomas N. Layton
Stanford University Press
Copyright 1997

War Against the Weak
Eugenics and America's Campaign to Create a Master Race
Edwin Black
Four Walls, Eight Windows
Copyright 2003

Zimmerman Telegram, The
Barbara W. Tuchman
Ballantine Books
Copyright 1958